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MEMOIRS

OF

JOHN BANNISTER,

COMEDIAN.

BY JOHN ADOLPHUS, ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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OF

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ABOUT this period, Bannister changed his abode from Frith Street to Gower Street, where he passed the remainder of his days. An anecdote is recorded concerning this change : it may not range in the first line of wit, but it shows at least the advantage

derived from ready good-humour; a quality which gains so many friends, where wit creates so many enemies; which strews the path of life with the sweet and innoxious violet, instead of the fragrant but thorny rose. He threw out balconies from the front of his drawing-room windows; a projection not known in any other house in the street, in violation, perhaps, to some clause in the building lease. The parish authorities, having no authority at all, came to remonstrate, alleging that it was contrary to an act of parliament; Bannister dumb-founded the dignity of the churchwarden by saying, "Sir, I have studied acts of plays, but I never meddled with acts of parliament." The spiritual and temporal officer (for such is a churchwarden) retreated; and as the Duke of Bedford, or his agent, never took up the important question, the balconies remain even unto this day.

In a former page, mention is made of the appearance of Miss Bannister, John's sister: she afterward married Mr. Swendall, a performer of respectable abilities, who played, at Drury Lane, Moody, in "The Country Girl," (27th May,) for the benefit of his father-in-law, and afterward became manager of the Manchester theatre. This family connexion was of some importance to Bannister; as the activity, judgment, and friendship of his sister and his brother-in-law were often called

into exertion when he visited the country in the course of his profession.

These visits may be said to have commenced, as a frequent practice, in this year (1797); for, although he had on two former occasions gone to Liverpool and to Dublin, those excursions hardly interrupted, but never superseded, his London engagements. In the present summer he absented himself altogether from the Haymarket. Colman says, this took place “without the slightest interruption of that friendship which had so long endeared them to each other.” This account is literally true; there was no interruption of friendship; but there was a difference, which, acting on two minds less happily constituted, might have produced a total alienation.

Bannister's salary at the Haymarket, I believe, was only twelve pounds per week; a remuneration far below the deserving of a performer so eminent and so popular, and who sustained a greater round of principal characters than had probably ever been undertaken by one man. He applied to Colman for an advance; but, as his first request did not meet with immediate compliance, he repeated it in a more urgent manner. He received an answer more in the tone of a manager than a friend, “Where could you do so well?”—“Well or ill,” he replied, “I will leave you at all hazards.”

He then began to make engagements with the

proprietors of country theatres; Colman, not believing that he could be in earnest, let several months elapse before he requested to see him. He then produced the two first acts of "The Heir at Law," which he read, saying, "There, Mr. Jack, I have fitted you now; Pangloss is the very thing for you."—"It is so," said Bannister, "but it is now too late: I must go into the country; my engagements are made."—"Pooh!" Colman answered; "you will ruin yourself, and lose the best part you ever had."—"I am sorry to lose Pangloss," the performer replied with characteristic, although, perhaps, unexpected firmness; "but go I must." The manager displaying some warmth, Bannister, with unaltered temper, only said, "Well, on my return I will show you my receipts, and I think I shall convince you that I have decided rightly." The intended cast of the play was Dr. Pangloss, Bannister; Lord Duberley, Munden; Zekiel Homespun, Fawcett: but, in consequence of Bannister's absence, his part was assigned to Fawcett; Suett played Lord Duberley, and Munden honest Zekiel. The success of the comedy could not have been more complete than it was, even if the original cast had been retained.

Bannister first performed at Birmingham, and received his accustomed applause in his most prominent characters, to which he added some in which he had not before appeared. For his benefit, he

took "The Will;" and, to use the plain terms of the chronicler from whom I derive the fact, he had "a genteel and overflowing house." The produce was £148, a larger sum than was received by Mrs. Siddons, or any other performer, except the manager, Mr. Macready, who had £188.

His next visit was to Edinburgh, where he was hailed with all the expressions of satisfaction that liberality, judgment, and good taste can bestow. He had appeared in a few of his best characters, when he was compelled to retreat, for a time, before the only persevering enemy he ever had,—the gout. The boxes had been engaged for every night of his performance, and the manager closed the theatre until he should again be able to appear. Fortunately, that event was not long delayed.

Soon after his restoration, a distressing occurrence disturbed the joy of the theatre for one evening at the least. A gentleman, sitting in the pit, was struck down, and severely wounded on the head, by a stone bottle thrown from the gallery. Mr. S. Kemble, the manager, came forward, and offered ten guineas for a discovery of the perpetrator of this wanton and dangerous outrage. Confusion was at its height, when Bannister, from one of the boxes, announced that the offender was found, and would probably be brought to justice. The satisfaction conveyed by this information was converted

into a much warmer sentiment, when Bannister, lamenting the disgraceful occurrence, implored the indulgence of the audience toward any imperfection in his exertions which might be occasioned by the agitation he had experienced. His request was not one of mere form. He played young Rapid in "The Cure for the Heartache," and it was evident that his powers were impaired by distress of mind; but the audience sympathized too heartily to censure such a defect, proceeding from such a cause.

I have not ascertained at what other country theatres he performed; but, after an absence of about twelve weeks, he refuted the prediction of Colman by producing to him an account, showing a clear balance of fourteen hundred pounds.

Drury Lane opened on the 19th of September 1797. The first novelty in which Bannister appeared was a farce, (7th October,) called "The Chimney Corner." The author was Mr. Walsh Porter, a gentleman of fortune, high in the world of fashion, whose villa, whose paintings, and whose dinners too, were greatly admired by persons most celebrated for taste. Happy had it been for him if he had confined his navigation to this placid sea, and not launched on the ocean of the drama. Kelly's music, the playing of Bannister in a character called Hilario, of Miss De Camp, Mrs. Bland, and Miss Leak, could not propitiate the angry pow-

ers; a total wreck ensued, and every vestige of the luckless bark was buried in the fathomless gulph of oblivion.

His next new character (21st October) was Sponge, in Reynolds's comedy of "Cheap Living." This play contains much brilliant dialogue, and no inconsiderable comic humour; but the plot is improbable, and the incidents feeble even to childishness: it is one for which the exertions of performers might extort applause during one representation, but to which no man would go a second time, or send his friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Shatter are professed sharps, but, in reality, two of the most stupid flats that can be imagined; professing to dupe and delude others, without sufficient self-control to keep their real characters concealed for a single moment, if a temptation of any kind occurs: yet Palmer and Miss Pope displayed these personages to advantage, and made them endurable. A still greater wonder was Sir Edward Bloomly, a youth of sixteen, who has run the whole round of fashionable folly, and acquired an unmeasured store of worldly wisdom. He has fought a duel, rode a sweepstakes at Newmarket, made himself master of all games; has, in one winter, broken two Faro banks, and ruined a score of blacklegs. He has been a man these five years; and seen as much of the world in one,

as a pedant could in twenty. He is too old to marry ; considers a man superannuated at thirty, and at forty, in his second childhood. All this is too absurd even for a burlesque essay in a periodical paper ; but, gilded by some generous actions and just sentiments, and supported by the perfect acting of Mrs. Jordan, it was tolerably well received.

Spunge, the part assigned to Bannister, gives denomination to the play, and is happily conceived and forcibly written ; all the genius of the author is displayed in it. There is no novelty in the conception of a parasite who, for the sake of good feeding and free quarters, will at every opportunity thrust himself into the society of “all people who have aught to give :” but such a clever, witty, shameless, persevering adventurer as Spunge is perhaps unexampled ; and the character is rescued from hatred by being free from any vice unconnected with the enjoyment of the moment, and, on the contrary, endued with virtue sufficient to undertake the protection of a distressed lady, at the risk of losing good dinners and Burgundy, or even of being drawn into a duel, a situation which he confesses himself to hold in most religious fear. When the lady asks if he will take part against her, he answers “No :—came here to eat a good supper ; and curse me if I spoil my appetite ! I wish to live cheap, not unhappily.” Such a part was evidently

fitted to the talent of Bannister. Nothing could exceed the humour he displayed in a short dialogue with Sir Edward.

“ *Edw.*—Pray, Spunge, how long is it since you paid for a dinner?

“ *Spunge.*—How long!—let me see :—oh,—three years ago,—remember it well,—dined at the Bedford,—bill fourteen shillings,—I,—not one in my pocket.

“ *Edw.*—Well! and what did you?

“ *Spunge.*—Borrowed a guinea of the landlord,—paid my reckoning, and pocketed seven shillings by the dinner ;—that’s the way to live cheap.”

The author himself says, in his “ *Life and Times*,” that Bannister’s was a rich representation of Spunge. The play ran, according to some accounts, seven nights; the author says, eight or ten.

Little notice is required of two other pieces in which Bannister appeared. The first, by Deputy Birch, called “ *Fast Asleep*,” not original in its outline, was received (28th October) with marked disapprobation, and withdrawn: nor did it meet with better success when reproduced (27th November); it was then definitively consigned to the dramatic dormitory.

Lord Duncan’s glorious victory over the Dutch fleet was celebrated by Mr. Franklin in a piece in one act, called “ *A Trip to the Nore*.” He wrote it, he says, in a few hours; it appeared on the 7th of December, and was performed about thirteen

times. It was the vehicle of some sentiments of the most trite and vulgar description ; and of some songs, the merit of which lay entirely in the singers. It contained some novelty : there was an Irishman without wit or humour, a Scotchman neither shrewd nor sly, a cockney tailor and his wife too vulgar and flat to be laughed at ; and poor Banister had to tug at the oar as Ben Bowsprit, a sailor, drunk, without fun or jollity, and, instead of sentiments, uttering vain boasts and unprofessional nonsense.

In a much different light is to be viewed " The Castle Spectre," by Matthew George Lewis, Esq. author of a celebrated romance called " The Monk." This drama, for by that most general name the author is pleased to call it, was performed (14th December) with perfect success. The plot is a romance, not very probable, nor well connected ; the language, both in the serious and comic parts, open to much censure ; the gentleman locked up in a cellar, like the old baron in Schiller's " Robbers ;" the lady ghost, who shows herself twice, sings a nursery song, and discloses nothing ; the four negro slaves, resident in the castle of a feudal baron, and railing at the slave-trade centuries before such a traffic was commenced : all these, and many more palpable and avowed blemishes, could not prevail against the rapidity of the action, the interest of the

scenes, and the admirable skill of the performers. Kemble and Mrs. Jordan sustained the principal weight ; and never were their exertions more advantageously made, or more profusely applauded. Bannister's character was that of Motley, a good-humoured, frisky, fond, affectionate, and loyal fool ; and he bore away his full portion of the general approbation. Criticism assailed the piece in almost every part, but public feeling soared above the censures of the closet ; it was played in the first season seven-and-forty times. Perhaps the success and the merit of " The Castle Spectre" cannot be more forcibly (I do not say justly) contrasted than they are in the following repartee, extracted from the " Biographia Dramatica." Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Lewis had some dispute in the green-room, when the latter offered, in confirmation of his arguments, to bet Sheridan all the money which " The Castle Spectre" had brought, that he was right. " No," said Sheridan, " I cannot afford to bet so much ; but I'll tell you what I'll do,—I'll bet you all it is worth."

Not less was the success (and it is not necessary to put their merits into balance) of Colman's " Blue Beard," performed with all the operatic strength of the company, and with all the aids that scenery, decoration, and stage contrivance could bestow (16th January). Colman was particularly happy in adapt-

ing this cherished nursery fable to the stage : he had full licence to throw loose the reins of his imagination ; and so long as he kept the darlings of our infancy,—Blue Beard, his wife, and sister Ann, the mysterious chamber and the enchanted tell-tale key,—before us, he had unlimited discretion as to whatever else he might choose to introduce : he was welcome to have three-tailed bashaws and spahis, and as many pasteboard horses and elephants as the stage would hold.

Colman says, as an apology for having had recourse to this nursery story, that the children, both old and young, being accustomed to expect a pantomime at Christmas, and the house having provided no other, he had prepared this trifle to supply the place of a harlequinade. The apology is unworthy of him : the piece was not acted until nearly a month after Christmas, when the holidays were over, and the young misses and masters returned to their “ *Fables choisies*” and their “ *Excerpta*.” A pantomime on the subject of Blue Beard had been unsuccessful some winters before ; the French had made a dramatic essay on the story, under the name of “ *Raoul Barbe Bleue*,” and this was in fact the basis of the piece. Kelly discloses the truth with such characteristic *naïveté*, that he shall tell it here in his own words. “ After the success of ‘ The Castle Spectre,’” he says, “ I determined to endeavour

to get the French programme of 'Blue Beard,' which I had brought from Paris, dramatized. I accordingly called upon my valued friend, George Colman, and told him that I had brought him the outline of a French romance, which I believed, if he would undertake to write it, would prove highly successful : I told him moreover that my object was to endeavour to establish my name as a composer by furnishing the music for it ; that I was perfectly sure a week's work would accomplish the literary part of the two acts, for which I would give him a couple of hundred pounds. After having discussed the subject and two bottles of wine, the witty dramatist agreed to my terms, and I promised to accompany him to his country-house and remain with him for a week. I did so, and, before the week was ended, the piece was complete ; and those who have seen it—and who has not ?—will bear testimony to the admirable manner in which he executed his task."

If in the writing of "Blue Beard" there is not a sufficient portion of wit,—if the poetry of the songs is not of a quality to justify the high approbation of the town,—yet the beauty of the scenery, the aptness (after the first night) of the machinery, and, above all, the exquisite and well-employed talent of the performers, were calculated to win approbation from the indifferent, or even the churlish : not one part could have been better filled. Palmer condescended

to perform the savage bashaw ; he gave to his love the proper haughtiness, and roared out his impatience to fill up the number of his murders with characteristic force. Dicky Suett, as Ibrahim, father-in-law of Blue Beard, punned, exulted, shivered, and ran away, with his usual drollery. Kelly put forth his best powers to give effect to his own music ; and even the little part of a little negro, brought on merely to waste a few minutes, was made of value by Hollingsworth. Bannister, in Shacabac, the honest and reluctant confidant of a villanous master, highly increased his reputation. The workings of his mind when indignation at the past murders of his patron, and a desire to prevent that which was then in contemplation, were ill restrained by fear, and by a knowledge that Abome-lique “ wore a charmed life,” gave scope to his fine display of blended tragic and comic power ; while his gay, frolicksome, innocent love, won all hearts, and made many envy Beda.

Adverting to the ladies : it is not possible to praise too highly the exquisite feeling with which Mrs. Crouch played and sung the oppressed and unfortunate Fatima. Mrs. Bland, always happy as the sweetheart of Jack Bannister, embellished Beda with her sweetest notes. Her song, “ His sparkling eyes were dark as jet,” and the duet, “ Tink-a-tink,” which she performed with Bannister, were among

her most popular exertions. But Miss de Camp (Mrs. Charles Kemble) excelled all her former excellences, and rose to the highest pitch of scenic charm in Irene. A firm and an immovable affection for her sister Fatima, impaired only by the urgency of female curiosity, which makes her unintentionally involve her beloved relative in so much peril; a pert self-confidence, shown somewhat saucily toward her father, were forcibly displayed: but the crown, the high achievement of the character, was her interesting grief at the menaced woful catastrophe; and in the quartette, where, following the nursery fable, the author places her at the top of a tower, to "look out if she can see anybody coming," her advance from an infant hope to a full-grown assurance of aid, her progressive animation from the moment when she sees "a cloud of dust arise," to that when she sees "them galloping," her scream of joy, and the agitation of her whole frame when she "waves her handkerchief,"—all these constituted the high perfection of the dramatic art; and there was not in the house an eye nor a hand which did not give signs of sensibility, and pay a tribute of applause.

Kelly's pleasing and effective music, the delight of the audience, afforded some ground for invidious carping; but it could not be depreciated by the criticisms of the envious. Men who delight in

trumpeting forth their sagacity, by disclosing what never was a mystery, told us that the celebrated “tink-a-tink” was a Russian melody; Kelly never concealed or denied it. They further alleged that the beautiful March in the first act was not his; but the assertion was not more illiberal than unfounded: he demonstrated the fact; and his assertion was corroborated by Mr. Eley, the master of the band of the Horse Guards, to whom these sagacious persons had attributed the composition. When he introduced into “Comus” the celebrated duet from “La Cosa Rara,” *Pace, O caro mio sposo*,—in the English, “O thou wert born to please me,”—it was published as Kelly’s duet, and popularly so called: but he never pretended it was his; he could not be so stupid as to imagine that he could steal, without detection, from a popular opera, in the height of its career, known to every musician, and even to all the numerous shoal of dabblers in music. But such facts and such suppositions gave rise to the charge that he was not the author of his own works; and formed a foundation of Sheridan’s joke when Kelly commenced business as a wine-merchant: “Write over your door, ‘Mic, composer of wine, and importer of music.’”

“Knave or Not,” a comedy by Holcroft, in which Bannister performed (25th January) the part of Jonas, was little recommended by felicity of inven-

tion, probability in conduct, or vivacity in dialogue. Had the comedy been fortunate, Jonas would have added not a leaf to the laurels of the performer. He has no more sense than Squire Richard, in the "Provoked Husband;" but is not without the virtue of good-nature, and is spoiled by a foolish and wicked mother. His oppressed and neglected brother sums up his character in a short sentence: "He has the caprice and obstinacy of a pampered son, but his heart is open and kind."

At the period when this piece was produced, Holcroft was regarded with suspicion and dislike by many, as a supposed member of a faction which was labouring by insidious, as well as by direct means, to overthrow the government and religion of the country. He had been included in the same indictment with Hardy, Horne Tooke, and Thelwall; voluntarily surrendered himself to meet a trial; but was discharged, because the advisers of government, after three acquittals, considered further prosecution useless. After his liberation, he made vigorous attacks on the proceedings of the ministry and their friends, in pamphlets and in novels; and it was supposed that he would not be more forbearing in his dramas.

In "Knave or Not," Monrose, his principal personage, was calculated to give force to the suspicions which were entertained. A few of his earliest

speeches not only showed his character, but seemed to indicate the intent of the piece. He tells his sister, an honest and virtuous country girl, of his intention to make her fortune and his own.

“Not by becoming a wicked cheat,” she says. “No, Harry; that’s not the way.”

“You mistake,” he answers; “that is the only way, ’tis the common calling! Fur gowns, gold chains, and white wands, are its rewards. From high to low ’tis all bargain and sale. And what is bargain and sale? Why, to display the good side and conceal the bad; that is, to cheat and lie! Fools and knaves are the two grand classes; for the honest men are too insignificant, and too few, to form a class. Poverty and disgrace are got by keeping them company; and he that would thrive must shun them as he would the plague.”

This, and much more of the same kind, would have passed some years before as mere common-place, or as the ravings of a moody misanthrope; but in the existing state of politics, and from such a writer, every unfavourable conclusion was adopted. The author, and some portion of the public, believed that political feeling alone caused the bad success of the play; and it has been well observed, that there certainly were some abstract passages of rather a suspicious nature which provoked the censure of the audience: but, if the dramatic merit of the piece had

been at all obvious, it would have overcome and survived this opposition. The absurdity of the plot, its utter destitution of interest, the undramatic manner in which it was developed, the insignificance of the characters, their want of originality, the impotency of the humour, and, in short, the awkwardness with which the whole was conducted, must have sealed its fate, had the design been of the most inoffensive or even of the most commendable nature. From this general censure, however, must be excepted the language, which was for the most part constructed with great elegance, and united strength of thought with purity of phrase. Before the second representation, Mr. Wroughton read a paper, drawn up by the author, in which he disclaimed having had any party views, and solicited a patient hearing. This request was granted, and the play went on without interruption ; but it only lived four or five nights.

Three more pieces, in which Bannister performed, were without success. One was "Hannah Hewitt," derived from a novel of the same name, by Dibdin. He weakly fancied that the *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* could be transferred to a female ; and, not content with trying the experiment in a mawkish romance, he brought it on the stage (7th May), for Bannister's benefit, in an unendurable farce.

Poor O'Keeffe terminated his dramatic labours with a comedy called "She's eloped." He did not include it in the edition of his works, which was published for his benefit; but the account he has given in his "Recollections" is amusing, and will be an apology for introducing a specimen of the old gentleman's garrulity. "For the first time in my life," he says, "I ventured at Drury Lane. I brought out a five-act comedy, 'She's eloped,' which was acted one night; and this was the last appearance of my Muse before an English public. My racer, that had so often started for and won the plate, and been distanced only once, ('The Man-milliner,') quitted the course to turn into the green paddock, there to walk at his leisure and lie down at his ease. The comedy of 'She's eloped' as I originally wrote it, and the comedy as altered by me and acted, were nearly distinct pieces. I was forced to cut out, mangle, and change whole characters and incidents; John Bannister, who did Plodden, remarked to me, 'This was a very good part when I first got it, but now I can make nothing of it.' Mrs. Jordan did my heroine, Arabel; Miss Pope, Miss Highbury; Miss Mellon, Grace; John Palmer, Sir Charles Hyacinth, &c. The title was not good, I never liked it; I had given it some other, I forget what. James Aickin, the then

acting-manager, was very attentive to me; Mrs. Powell was also friendly and kind, and was the first who ever led me by the hand into a Drury Lane green-room. I felt pleasure in crossing those boards on which my Muse had so often sported. In the green-room, among other amateurs, was Sir Charles Burdett, to whom I was introduced by my friend John Bannister. A celebrated author wrote a prologue for ‘She’s eloped;’ but it talked of Homer, and poverty, and blindness; and though it paid very pretty compliments to my productions, the proud pang of a wounded spirit came over me, and at the last rehearsal, in the presence of all the performers, I peremptorily forbade its being spoken, and chose that of Mr. John Taylor: putting the copy into the hand of John Palmer, I said, ‘Study and speak that.’ This was, I believe, the last new part performed by Palmer; he died shortly after at Liverpool. Mr. M. G. Lewis wrote an epilogue, which was well spoken by Mrs. Jordan: and thus closed on me the 19th of May 1798.”

O’Keeffe also worked up a sort of entertainment for R. Palmer’s benefit (6th June); a medley of characters from his various pieces, called a “Nosegay of Weeds.” The idea was not a bad one, had the personages been connected by anything like a plot or story: but they walked on and walked off,—

Bannister in Bowkitt, among the rest,—much in the same way that they would at an Opera-house masquerade ; speaking for the moment, but unconnected for the residue of their lives. It has been said that the title, “ A Nosegay of Weeds,” was too affectedly modest ; but the idea was borrowed from the Duke of Buckingham’s epilogue to “ The Rehearsal.”

“ We well might call this short mock-play of ours
A posy made of weeds, instead of flowers.”

These were the few failures in a season remarkable for its general success ; “ The Castle Spectre,” “ Blue Beard,” and “ The Stranger” would have compensated to the treasury for the wreck of every other novelty produced.

One remarkable incident deserves to be noticed. It was the appearance of Smith (16th May), for the benefit of his old friend and fellow performer, King. Smith left, for the occasion, the retreat where he was enjoying all the comforts which opulence and high consideration can bestow, to solicit the attention of the public, and to aid the cause of his less fortunate associate. In “ The School for Scandal” they performed their original parts of Sir Peter and Charles : King rather walked through his character than played it ; but Smith rose into a high flow of spirits, and, requiring but little allowance on the

score of age, gave us still the animated resemblance of a fine gentleman of the old school. In a few concluding lines, appended to the comedy, he said,

“ At friendship’s call, ne’er to be heard in vain,
My spirits rise, —Richard’s himself again.”

CHAPTER XX.

1798 — 1799.

Bannister not engaged at the Haymarket, Colman having resolved to form an independent company.—Bannister at Manchester,—York,—Liverpool.—Sudden death of Palmer.—Benefit for his family at Liverpool,—at the Opera-house,—and at Drury Lane ;—Bannister performs in them all.—Letter of Lady Holland.—Bannister at Margate.—Benefit to Lacy at the Haymarket.—Some discussion respecting Bannister's engagement ;—his stipulation for his father.—Letters of Mr. Richardson,—Mrs. Jordan.—Drury Lane.—The Outlaws, by Franklin.—Bannister plays Kourakin, in *The Captive of Spilburg*.—A Word for Nature, by Cumberland.—Bannister in *Leonard*.—Aurelio and Miranda,—derived from the *Monk*.—Bannister in *Don Christoval*.—*Feudal Times*, by Colman.—The Secret, by Morris.—Bannister in *Jack Lizard*.—The Twins.—The East Indian, by M. G. Lewis.—His account of its origin and composition.—Bannister acts Frank, and speaks an epilogue in the character of Queen Elizabeth.—Plays Watty Cockney, in *The Romp*.—King's Benefit ; Will and No Will, revived without success.—First Faults, by Miss De Camp.—Claim made by Mr. Earle.—Bannister in *Petruchio*,—Miss De Camp in *Catherine*.—He plays Trim in *The Funeral*.—The Copper Captain.—Pizarro,—its great merit and success.

DURING the next and some ensuing seasons, Bannister did not perform at the Haymarket. The manager considering himself injured by the proprietors of the two winter theatres, who, keeping their houses

open to a late period, prevented him from enjoying the fair chance of a profitable season, announced his determination to form a company independent of the performers at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. His resolution, if it could be sustained, was founded on reason and justice. By the terms of his patent he could open his house only from the 15th of May to the 15th of September; and the value of his privilege was miserably reduced by the practice of the great theatres in retaining the services of the best players till the latter end of June, or, if they pleased, later, for there was no limitation to their right. Other circumstances were no less unfavourable, particularly the rule at the Haymarket not to receive half-price; while, at the other houses, that indulgence attracted a large portion of the public.

Colman's determination, of course, excluded Bannister; and he again commenced a series of country engagements, beneficial at once to his health, his fame, and his finances.

At Manchester he appeared in July 1798, was received with the warmest applause, and had an ample benefit; closing the entertainments of the evening with an address, in which he expressed gratitude for their favours, and a hope that he should return on a future occasion to enjoy them. His reception at York was no less cheering: he first appeared in his favourite and unrivalled Colonel

Feignwell ; and throughout his engagement, and at his benefit, crowded houses and hearty plaudits proved the estimation in which he was held.

Liverpool, where Bannister next appeared, was the scene of an extraordinary event, which occasioned a strong public feeling : the sudden death, upon the stage, of a justly deserving favourite, Mr. John Palmer. He was acting "The Stranger," a part to which Kemble had given great celebrity ; and, at an interesting period of the drama, fell suddenly on his back, and expired without a groan. The house was speedily evacuated, and not opened again until after his funeral. His life had long been a conflict against pecuniary difficulties, and some recent domestic calamities pressed heavily on his spirits. A night was immediately given for the benefit of his orphan children, to which Bannister lent his aid ; Mr. Roscoe contributed a poetical address, which was delivered by Holman ; and Lady Derby evinced her proper feeling by a donation of fifty pounds : the whole produce, presents included, was four hundred. Another benefit, for the same benevolent purpose, was given by Colman (18th August) ; and, as his house was not considered sufficiently capacious, his company performed at the Opera-house : Bannister played Walter, in "The Children in the Wood." A third benefit took place at Drury Lane (15th September), when the first

piece, fraught with mournful recollections, was "The Stranger;" and, in "The Citizen," Bannister for a third time enjoyed the satisfaction of contributing toward the comfort of his friend's family. It was said that, presents included, the produce of the house was between eight and nine hundred pounds.

How great an interest was taken in this melancholy event, and how highly the interference and general character of Bannister were estimated, will appear by the following letter from a lady, whose table was the appropriate resort of literature and talent, and whose approbation was a passport to fame.

"I do not know to whom to send the enclosed trifle (five pounds) for Mr. Palmer's children, as I do not intend being at the theatre myself; I therefore take the liberty of begging you to convey it in the manner you judge best. I see in the newspapers that it is not certain whether you intend engaging at Drury Lane this season. If it is not asking an impertinent question, I should like to know whether there is any foundation for that report; as I should be unwilling to settle finally for my box, unless I were certain of enjoying the satisfaction of seeing your acting, which in my opinion is the greatest inducement to attend the play.

"I am with regard, yours,

"ELIZABETH HOLLAND."

Drawing nearer to London as the winter season approached, Bannister played a few nights at Margate, with his usual popularity and success.

To close the account of irregular performances, it may be mentioned here, that, long after the opening of Drury Lane, he assisted Mrs. Abington and some other benevolent theatrical characters in affording a gratuitous benefit at the Haymarket to Mr. Lacy, the son of a former proprietor of Drury Lane, and who had, without much success, made an essay in tragic acting. The pieces were "The Jealous Wife," "Sylvester Daggerwood," and "High Life below Stairs."

From the concluding passage of Lady Holland's letter, and from her general acquaintance with every transaction in the literary and dramatic world, it may be inferred that she was not unapprised of a little difficulty which at this period existed with respect to Bannister's engagement at Drury Lane. That some differences arose between him and the proprietors, and that they were amicably adjusted, the following letters from Mr. Joseph Richardson will show: they will prove also the generous filial feeling which acted on the mind of Bannister, inducing him to sacrifice a portion of his own emolument to meet the wants of his father. What the grounds of difference were, I am unable to ascertain; but enough exists to prove the high estimation in

which Bannister was held, although, in the imperial style of a theatrical proprietor driving a bargain, something of loftiness may be discerned.

“DEAR SIR,

“We have absolutely offered you our decided *ultimatum* on the subject of the future connexion between you and Drury Lane theatre. It has been done upon mature and dispassionate consideration. Seventeen pounds a week for yourself, and seventy pounds per annum for your father. Your own terms are not more advantageous, nor indeed so much so, for yourself; and the mode of doing it is everything to us in point of precedent. Mr. Franklin, who has kindly undertaken to submit this to you from us, and to show you Mr. Sheridan’s letter, has favoured me with a sight of your answer. I am willing to make one more effort. We will not be intimidated into measures which upon the fullest deliberation we think wrong. The business of the theatre peremptorily calls for a decision upon the point in the course of to-morrow morning. You have heard the absolutely final determination of the proprietors. Have the goodness to send me your decision on the matter by twelve o’clock to-morrow, that the proprietors may govern their arrangements accordingly. We do not fear, under all the circumstances, of suf-

fering in the estimation of the public. With great good wishes,

“ Yours,

“ J. RICHARDSON.”

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I should have written to you yesterday, but was informed by a note from Mr. Franklin that you were out of town. Mr. F. has just called, and told me that you were in for this day. I lose no time in acquainting you that the proprietors agree to your proposition of seventeen pounds per week for yourself, and seventy pounds a year to your father during his life, to be advanced to him in half yearly payments of 35*l.* each. The annuity to be extended to you after your father's decease, provided you continue to perform after that time at Drury Lane theatre. I hope therefore that we shall have your cheerful assistance and co-operation immediately; and that you will call upon Mr. Aickin, and consult with him at what time and in what part you can present yourself to your old friends the public.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Very truly yours,

“ J. RICHARDSON.”

“ Princes Street, Hanover Square,

“ 25th September 1798.”

To this difference with the proprietors, Mrs. Jordan also alluded, in terms flattering to Bannister, and characteristic of her own kind and friendly feelings.

“Friday.

“DEAR SIR,

“Since I last saw you, I have been very strongly solicited to perform at Drury Lane; indeed, so much so, that I have consented for one night only a week, as long as I am able: this is the reason of my not sooner giving you a positive answer. You will, I am sure, with your usual candour, acknowledge the impropriety of my playing here when I thought it necessary to stipulate so strongly for only one night per week at Drury Lane. I saw Aickin yesterday, who laments your absence much; but I hope everything will be settled to your satisfaction: that it may be so, I am very sincere in my wish, for I feel my own performances would suffer most without the *combination of your admirable talents*.

“I am, Sir,

“Yours sincerely,

“DORA JORDAN.”

At the opening of Drury Lane, Mr. Wroughton having retired from the stage, Mr. Aickin became manager. Bannister's first new character was (16th

October) in "The Outlaws," a musical after-piece, by Mr. Franklin. It is said to have possessed considerable merit, and to have been supported by some good music of Florio ; but, as the farce was little played, never printed, and has long since been forgotten, I cannot even give the name of the character assigned to him.

His next part (16th November) was Kourakin, in "The Captive of Spilburg," avowedly translated from "Le Souterrain," a French piece, by Camille. Kourakin is a servant neither trusted nor suspected absolutely, but both a little, by his master Korowitz, a Bohemian nobleman ; who, from a groundless jealousy, keeps his wife locked up in a cellar, from which she is delivered at last, nobody knows why, but by command of the Emperor. Kourakin is honest, inquisitive, indiscreet, busy, talkative, and drunken ; but he displays no powerful passion, nor performs any interesting action. On the whole, the labour of translation was not repaid by any merit in the story or incidents.

Mr. Cumberland (5th December) put in "A Word for Nature," in the shape of a five-act comedy. It lived but five nights, and possessed the chief faults which the author had suffered to creep into his dramas,—personages without the least pretension to originality, a languid story, and a plot which could create no interest, because the end

was foreseen as soon as the chief characters appeared ; but it had also the beauty which never was absent from his compositions,—dialogue correct, elegant, and pointed, just sentiments and happy illustrations. Bannister, in Leonard, was supposed to speak the Word for Nature ; because, being ignorant, ill-educated, and a tool in the hand of an intriguing, worthless mother, he gives up a claim on a young lady about whom an iniquitous contract had been contrived by his mama, when he finds that she is in love with somebody else. This is proper and natural, but it is only “A Word for Nature ;” because the honest youth has no skill in the arts ; because he does not brave the Heathen gods in their native Greek, or raise himself to a level with them in unchristian Latin.

“Aurelio and Miranda,” a drama in five acts, with music, was an attempt made by Mr. Boaden (29th December) to raise on the stage the interest and emotions which had been created by Mr. M. G. Lewis in his romance of “The Monk.” This extraordinary production had, from its first publication, run the gauntlet of criticism, and endured more than military castigation from every hand ; from the lisping sciolist, who, to crown his imperishable labours, has made it certain that a singular nominative and a plural verb make a false concord ; the profound chronologist, who

has ascertained that the flood was before the conquest ; the accurate tuner of the Muse's lyre, who can authentically assure us that 'genius' is not a rhyme to 'Greenwich' ; the matter-of-fact maintainer, who will not endure the mention of ghosts, demons, or any supernatural agents ; and above, and most formidable of all, the rigid preserver of religion and morals, who can apprehend the extinction of female modesty from an ambiguous expression, or the inroad of infidelity through the aperture of an inconsiderate allusion. In spite of all these attacks, and of many faults "too obvious for detection, too gross for exaggeration," "The Monk," by the powerful sway of its incidents, its command over the feelings, and the beauties of its composition both in prose and verse, acquired and retained an immovable hold on the fancy, quite sufficient to quiet the remonstrances of the judgment. But still the perusal of this exquisite romance was in the nature of an unhallowed delight, practised by many, avowed by few ; and the attempt to make a whole audience concur in expressions of approval was a formidable and a fearful risk.

To render his voyage somewhat less hazardous, Mr. Boaden endeavoured to dramatize the leading incident of the romance without recourse to supernatural agency. To do this, was to break the charm ; to reduce the splendid vapour to mere colourless

element; to change the picture of a giant falling, to that of a very feeble person standing half erect. In fact, "Aurelio and Miranda" were encumbered with all the disrepute of "Ambrosio and Matilda," without the vivifying spirit which gave them such irresistible, though terrible, charms.

Mr. Boaden's play has considerable merit in the composition; the serious part is often eloquent and poetical, the comic has that which, "if not wit, will serve the turn as well:" but still the plot, in itself, is heavy and lifeless; and whatever objections may be raised against the monk and the fiend, the traveller and the spectre,—the recollection of them, which haunts us during the performance, makes us feel that a flitting ghost is better company than a prostrate corpse. It was played seven nights, and the author candidly acknowledges that it was unfit for a longer existence.

Bannister was Don Christoval, much like the same cavalier in the romance,—flippant, talkative, good-natured, and imbued with a rational horror at the amorous approaches of a conceited old woman. Mr. Kemble, in the Monk, displayed the beauty and dignity of his form, the impressive sublimity of his countenance, his skill in attitude, and his taste and judgment in costume, in unequalled perfection. Mrs. Siddons, from good-nature, undertook a character every way beneath her.

Colman produced (19th January 1799) a drama in two acts (so he describes it), under the name of "Feudal Times ; or, the Banquet Gallery." He pronounces, in his preface, "the man who indites an elaborate criticism on that which is sketched as a mere vehicle for sing-song and show, a blockhead, or worse, a malignant fellow, pretending to mistake a dramatist's jerkin for his best coat, that he may pick a hole in it." This huffing style is probably assumed by Mr. Colman in imitation of his predecessor, and occasionally prototype, Mr. Bayes. "It is a crust, sir," Bayes says,— "a crust for your rogue critics : let them nibble at that, if they dare ; egad ! it will rub their gums for them, I warrant." Well, then, if serious criticism must not approach, let an off-hand sentence from mere impulse serve. "Feudal Times" is an absurd, improbable, ill-contrived farrago, utterly unworthy the talents and fame of the author ; void of invention, either in plot or character ; and not elevated one step above the ordinary Christmas pantomime, for which it professes to be a substitute. The banquet scene, as the author acknowledges, is taken from "Tarare," written by Beaumarchais. Bannister's part of Martin could not, even by his efforts and the aid of Mrs. Bland, be rendered interesting or lively.

In Mr. Morris's comedy, "The Secret," Bannister acted (2nd March) Jack Lizard. He is one of the

sons of a scheming, worthless, heartless old wretch, who, having in former times aided in the atrocious plunder of an orphan female, but being reduced to poverty, fastens himself on his more opulent coadjutor, and, by threats of disclosing the secret, drives him, and all others upon whom he practises, to acts which tend to the emolument of himself and family, and to their own destruction. This part was played by Suett; the only comic portion was his easy manner of quartering himself and his offspring in his friend's house: there is considerable humour in his description of his sons, and his introduction of his daughter Susan, head-teacher in the school of Mrs. Monsoon, "that parent of science and needle-work, who fits out young ladies for India: not a girl but costs her parents a fortune in dress and accomplishments, and knows more of life at sixteen than her grandmother did at sixty." This creature was admirably personated by Miss Pope.

Jack Lizard is produced on the stage as a tame toad-eater to Sir Harry Fleetly, who says "he is the most useful fellow breathing: if you want a carriage built, dogs trained, or horses broke, there's not his match; he is everything at the club; Lord Spot's ponies and pointers were all of his choosing. But what we most admire is his talent for conversation: he's not one of your d—d prosing, clever fellows who are always on the watch for a good thing, as they

call it ;—I hate wit, it always spoils society ; your clever fellow is a bore that I constantly black-ball.”

He justifies this character by answering with gestures or in monosyllables ; but at length, goaded by necessity, and hunted by bailiffs, he breaks bounds, and requests his patron, a baronet of six thousand a year, to relieve his distress. This conversation draws forth so many words, that Sir Harry renounces him, and they are completely at variance : Jack resents his attempts at overbearing familiarity ; declares that he is sick of him, and dismisses him to his stud. The baronet considers this a base return for his friendship : “ Have I not,” he says, “ given you the run of my table, the use of my stud ; have I not introduced you to every club I belong to ? ” Jack answers ; “ Yes, you gave me the run of your table ;—out of hospitality ? No ! it was to taste and commend your wines. You gave me the use of your stud ;—for amusement ? No ! to train and show your horses. You introduced me to your clubs ;—as your friend ? No ! as your butt.”

As the conversation grows warm, Jack applies the words ‘ ignorance ’ and ‘ imbecility ; ’ and when the baronet repels the attack by speaking of his education, Jack gives this account of himself : “ I too had an education, what is called a liberal education ; I was sent to a public school, and thence to college. At the end of three years I was thrown upon the

world ; my imagination ardent, my passions high, my taste correct and cultivated ; all my habits, and desires, and expenses not suited to my own means, but to those of my associates ; I was soon involved in debt ; I gave myself to the pursuit of letters ; my labours were neglected, thrust from the shelf to make room for the frivolities of fashion. An accident seated me at one of your tables, my fancy fired at the opportunity ; I shone beyond my hopes ; I was complimented, congratulated ; I thought my fortune made. Fond fool !—they shunned me ever after ; they shrunk abashed with conscious inferiority ; and I was left the solitary recluse of a garret. For a while my pride supported me, till imagination sickened under the pressure of want, and all its powers were chilled ; food, food, seemed to my parched lip the only object of desire : I was in possession of the secret ; I came again among you, not as before with a proud display of all I knew, but as one the energies of whose mind were just equal to the shoeing a horse and the knowledge of his points ; and, above all, whose servility would bend under the coarse raillery of you and your associates. I succeeded ; I was lifted to the surface, I floated with you and the other insects of the hour.”

Had this character, which is strongly conceived, been associated with others equally worthy of notice, and combined in a fable interesting in itself and

worked out by probable means, it might have stood high in the catalogue of dramatic excellences : but, as the other personages are for the most part low and frivolous, the story feeble and imperfectly sustained, and the catastrophe inartificially produced, it is no wonder that "The Secret" has fallen into oblivion ; it is only surprising that the talents of the comedians could keep it alive seventeen nights.

As a digression from the routine, it may be mentioned that, for Jack Johnstone's benefit (30th April), Jack Bannister migrated to Covent Garden, and appeared in Bowkitt.

For his own benefit (8th April), after "Love for Love," "The Twins," a new farce by Mr. Lewis was produced. Bannister played both brothers : the plot obliged him to appear as a real and a pretended quaker ; but the attempt was not well received, and the piece was neither repeated nor printed.

In a former page, mention was made of a short-lived comedy called "The East Indian," in which Bannister performed the hero. In the present season Mr. Lewis produced, for the benefit of Mrs. Jordan (22nd April), another play with the same title. Beside the lady who took the benefit, many first-rate players contributed their aid ; Kemble and his brother, and Miss Pope, were among the number. Bannister's part was Frank, a very old

and faithful servant : he had to appear only in two scenes ; one, of sturdy attachment to his mistress, whom he refuses to quit when necessity urges her to dismiss him ; and one, of joyous intoxication, when her fortunes are improved, and she is raised to unbounded and unexpected affluence. The character he soon resigned into the hands of another.

Mr. Lewis says, in his preface, this comedy was written before he was sixteen ; one portion of the plot, taken from the novel of Sidney Biddulph, had previously been borrowed by Mr. Sheridan, and employed in “ *The School for Scandal*.” It was, as the author admits, admirably well acted ; but, although tolerated, not successful. It was performed in this season but twice, and an attempt to reproduce it in the following dramatic year was not encouraged. The author wrote a prologue, in which he well described his own youthful sensations when he composed the play ; and requested for it only a patient hearing, without deprecating the sentence which justice might dictate.

“ Ere sixteen years had wing’d their wanton flight,—
While yet his head was young, and heart was light,—
Our author plann’d these scenes ; and, while he drew,
How bright each colour seem’d, each line how true !
Gods ! with what rapture every speech he spoke !
Gods ! how he chuckled as he penn’d each joke !
And when at length his ravish’d eyes survey
That wond’rous work complete,—a five-act play,

His youthful heart how self-applauses swell !
—‘ It isn’t perfect, but it ’s vastly well ! ’ ”

In the epilogue, the author was less happy. It was spoken by Bannister in the character of Queen Elizabeth. If it had contained comparative allusions to the state of society in the reign of that illustrious sovereign, and the day of her reappearance, much wit, humour, morality, and patriotism might have been displayed ; but it was composed only of the coarsest burlesque turned inside outward,—a card sent from the queen to Pluto by Lord Burleigh,—her taking with him sulphur for tea, and brimstone for bread-and-butter,—and obtaining permission to come up to see the new comedy ; but

“ Should the piece fail,
The plot thought dull,—the humour coarse and stale,—
Bess, out of sorts, and poet, out of feather,
Are d—d alike, and jog down stairs together.”

Nothing surely could be more dull and puerile than this attempt. Mr. Bayes’s headsman is all life and fire in comparison with it ; and, without meaning to cant about profaneness and blasphemy, it may well be affirmed that such a mode of being witty in a dramatic piece ought to be avoided. Jeremy Collier carried his objection to an extreme, when, in reprehending Congreve for making Sir Samson Legend say, “ Ay ! marry me ; we Samsons were always strong dogs,” he exclaims, “ Thus is Samson

again brought into the temple of Dagon to make sport for the Philistines." From the days of Lucian to those of Kane O'Hara, and since, the gods of Olympus have been the subjects of burlesque and ridicule; among the rude farces which succeeded the mysteries of the olden time, Satan and Mephistophilus have been frequently introduced, and so they have in more recent pantomimes and operas; but then the Evil-one has only been taking a "walk upon earth." Queen Elizabeth was a Christian; and Christians are not expected, after death, to regale with the great enemy on sulphur and brimstone, to gossip with him in fashionable French, or to obtain a day-rule that they may visit the playhouse.

For the same benefit, Bannister played Watty Cockney, in "The Romp;" a part to which he was not well suited, and which he did not repeat.

On King's night (24th April) a farce was produced, called "Will and no Will; or, Wit's last Stake," written by the player himself more than thirty years previously, and not seen within the last twenty. It had extended to three acts, but was now compressed into one. Bannister had a character called Martin; but no encouragement was given which would afford a reason for repetition or publication.

Miss De Camp, too, brought forward for her benefit (3rd May) a comedy of her own writing, "First

Faults :” it was withdrawn after the first night, and never printed ; therefore it is not easy to define the value of Prater, the character allotted to Bannister. It is said, however, that the comedy was very favourably received, and by him ably supported. A gentleman, named Earle, published shortly afterward a comedy called “ Natural Faults ;” asserting that he had confided the manuscript to Miss De Camp, and that she had, with little alteration beyond that of names, converted it into the piece represented as her own. In a very sensible letter to the editor of a public paper she positively denied every fact alleged by Mr. Earle, and offered to do so on oath, if necessary ; asserted that she had never so much as seen him until he claimed her play ; that it had been submitted to the inspection of several of her friends before the time at which the gentleman said he had delivered his manuscript ; and that she could not have divined his motive for this proceeding, but for a visit from his father, proposing terms of accommodation,—an offer which had been rejected with contempt.

If this was an attempt at fraud, and by means of intimidation, nothing could be more base or foolish. All probability is against Mr. Earle’s story : if Miss De Camp wished to appear before the world as an author, she could, if unable to write herself, have had the assistance of numerous persons of wit and

talent with too much honour ever to betray her secret; and she was not likely to compromise the high character, both in the profession and in private life, which she had already acquired, by a trick so shallow and dishonourable as that which was imputed to her.

“Katherine and Petruchio” was the last piece played at her benefit; the wife by her, the husband by Bannister: the lady succeeded perfectly; but the hero did not, I believe, act the part again. He appeared also (17th April) as Trim, in “The Funeral,” without much effect, as the comedy never was very popular; and (14th May) as Michael Perez, the Copper Captain, in Fletcher’s “Rule a Wife and have a Wife.” The cast of this well-known and admirable comedy was exceedingly strong. Mr. Kemble, every way gifted to grace the part, was Leon: he was perhaps ludicrously abject in the earlier scenes, where he simulates meanness and folly; but when prompted by time, and urged by the conduct of his wife, and the insolent audacity of her suitors, he discloses himself in his genuine form, his spirit, dignity, and firmness, the haughty manner in which he reprehends the Duke of Medina, and the manly energy with which he reproves his wife, formed a display never excelled, seldom equalled. Cacafofo, a bloated object, a thing made of wine-skins and money-bags, one of the presumptuous

lovers of Margarita, Leon's wife, was most admirably represented by Dowton, who showed up brutality, sensuality, and meanness so powerfully, that, when he is kicked, bubbled, and exposed, we only regret that the blow is not heavier, the plunder more ample, and the disgrace attended with the confiscation of his darling wealth, or, if possible to him, a heavier calamity.

On Michael Perez and Estifania rests the principal comic interest of the play, and it is also strongly interwoven with the more serious plot. The Copper Captain, yielding too easily to suggestions and appearances, marries Estifania, a sprightly, clever, witty waiting-woman, believing her to be a great lady, and mistress of the domains which belong to Margarita. Many laughable situations of mistake and distress arise; from which poor Michael is at last withdrawn with an assurance that his wife's honour is above suspicion, and a promise that his welfare shall be secured, and his fortune promoted, by the affluent and happy Leon. These characters, always consigned to comedians of the first rank, were ably, although with some deviations from precedent, supported by Mrs. Jordan and Bannister, in whose hands they always afterward remained.

Such was the season (1798—1799) at Drury Lane, which might have been deemed unsuccessful; but, towards its close, Mr. Sheridan aroused his

mighty, though torpid, genius to the production of "Pizarro," which crowned the fame of the author, riveted the attention of the town, and replenished the failing treasury. All circumstances favoured the appearance of this piece. The German drama, emancipated from the icy chain of French regularity, had, with all its faults of wildness in conduct, and exaggeration in sentiment, acquired considerable popularity. The conqueror of Europe, in the plenitude of his pride, had fulminated his threats against England; invasion, plunder, subjection, were to be her lot. Far from seeking to avert danger, or mitigate calamity by submission or entreaty, a glowing spirit of loyalty and independence pervaded all classes; and love of the country, and zeal for its independence, were displayed in all possible forms. Mr. Sheridan, whatever were his party attachments, or whatever the principles which swayed some of his associates, had frequently shown that the honour and welfare of his country could always arouse his ardent exertions; and, on this occasion, he united with the gratification of his own feelings a flattering tribute to those of the audience. Rolla, the hero of his play, is a patriot of the genuine description; not one of those whose virtue consists in depreciating their own country, calumniating her friends, and vaunting the acts, the virtues, and resources of the enemy, but in

a firm, steady, and strenuous devotion of all the energies of his person and mind to her service, in acts of bravery and in sentiments of loyalty. It is not intended to analyze this piece, or to detail its course; but it may be observed that, in every part, it received the most ample support from the performers. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, in *Rolla* and *Elvira*, evinced unrivalled perfection: virtue in its two interesting states,—in the one, untarnished; in the other, struggling to emancipate itself from the tyrannical ascendancy of passion and of habit,—formed the outline of the characters. Charles Kemble and Mrs. Jordan, although not equally, were advantageously distinguished. In the short period between its first performance (24th May) and the close of the theatre (5th July), it was represented one-and-thirty times, to houses always crowded, to audiences always delighted: thirty thousand copies were issued from the press, and fifteen thousand pounds flowed into the treasury.

CHAPTER XXI.

1799—1800—1801.

Bannister at Weymouth,—warmly patronized by the King.—At Liverpool ;—Drury Lane.—Embarkation.—The Pavilion.—Origin of the farce, *Of Age To-morrow* ;—Bannister in Baron Willmhurst,—equivoques on his name.—The Egyptian Festival.—Madame Mara.—Bannister in *Longbow*.—*Children*, a farce.—*Indiscretion*, by Prince Hoare,—dedicated to Sir Vicary Gibbs ;—a word concerning that gentleman.—Pye's *Adelaide*.—Miss Baillie's *De Montfort*.—The King shot at in the playhouse,—his heroic behaviour.—Bannister at Windsor ;—patronized by the Royal Family.—His benefit, by command ;—Harry Angelo plays.—Bannister goes to Dublin.—Invited to Birmingham by Macready ;—appears there,—at Weymouth,—at Liverpool,—and at Plymouth.—Charles Bannister,—his situation.—The *One Tun*, a tavern.—Benefits at the Haymarket,—Lord Nelson attends.—Charles Bannister's imitations of old performers,—Barry, Woodward, Foote, and Garrick.—Drury Lane.—Kemble manager.—Wilmore Castle.—*Virginia*, by Mrs. Plowden.—The *Veteran Tar*, by Arnold ;—Bannister in *Tom Sturdy*.—*Deaf and Dumb*, by Holcroft ;—admirably performed.—Kemble, Wroughton, Miss De Camp.—Bannister in *Dupré*,—*Adelmor*, or *The Outlaw*.—Bannister in *Lodowick*.—He plays Captain Ironsides in *The Brothers*,—and several other characters in revived pieces.—Summer.—Birmingham.—Plays the Abbé de l'Épée.—Liverpool.—Haymarket.—His father's annual benefit.

IN the summer, Bannister received a request from the manager at Weymouth to perform before his

Majesty. Terms were proposed; but he declined remuneration, saying he deemed the honour sufficient. When informed of this spirited piece of loyalty, the sovereign said, "There are not many of them who would have done that." His stay was protracted; he went through many of his most admired performances, greeted with flattering applauses from the audience, and sanctioned by the gracious smile of the King, who commanded many of his appearances, and, with characteristic warmth and goodness, patronized his benefit. To these marks of favour he added an invitation to sail in the royal yacht whenever his engagements would permit. Such was the effectual answer to the charge in "The True Briton."

From this engagement he went to Liverpool, where, if he was not so highly honoured, he was not less joyfully received. Here, as before, he appeared in his most popular characters; and, as some proof of his estimation, it may be mentioned that the receipt at his benefit was greater than that of any other performer, regular or temporary, Miss Mellon excepted, who exceeded him by eighteen pounds: the lady had £269, Bannister £251.

At the opening of Drury Lane (17th September, 1799) Bannister was at his post, playing his accustomed character in "The Prize." The first

piece was "The Castle Spectre," but he had resigned Motley after the first season.

An expedition to the Helder, which took place this autumn, occasioned considerable bustle, and probably some comical adventures in the country; and, as it was the fashion to dramatize every naval and military transaction, Mr. Franklin seized on this event as a happy subject for a farce, which was produced (3rd October), and named "Embarkation." What humours it displayed, or what incidents it contained, cannot now be told, as its life on the boards was very short, and it was never published. Bannister's exertions, and a ballad by Mrs. Bland, were favourably noticed. Not more can be said of "The Pavilion," by Mr. Linley; on which Bannister, aided by Kelly, Mrs. Crouch, Mrs. Bland, and Miss De Camp, vainly laboured to bestow a protracted existence. The author exhibited it in an altered form (25th January), but with no better success.

In the production of the next piece, some unusual incidents occurred. Kotzebue having written a farce, which he fancied might succeed in England as well as in Germany, forwarded it to his friend Mr. Papendick, one of her Majesty's pages, who made a translation and tendered it to Mr. Harris, by whom it was refused. He had also shown it to

Bannister, who thought the incidents and situations might be produced with effect, and, accompanied by Kelly, went to Windsor, where they soon made an arrangement with Mr. Papendick, and acquired his right to the piece. At the request of Bannister, Tom Dibdin wrote the dialogue anew, and added some songs ; and one was contributed by Lewis. It was brought out (1st February) as "Of Age To-morrow," with complete success. Miss De Camp supported it by her admirable acting, and by the exquisite style in which she sung the songs, particularly that of Lewis, "Oh no, my love, no!" which immediately became a favourite with all classes. Suett and Wewitzer, in the characters of Baron Piffleberg and Hans Molkus,—a determined sportsman, and an old German soldier who has lost an arm in battle,—created great amusement. Bannister took the part of Baron Willmhurst, the hero of the piece, a dashing, adventurous young man, suddenly enamoured of Sophia, who is under the guardianship of a romantic, decayed old aunt. He uses many contrivances, essays many disguises, and at last carries his point. In one scene he presented himself before the old lady as a journeyman hair-dresser, and operated upon her locks with correct and laughable dexterity. He pretended that his master, Mr. Friz, was prevented waiting on her by an accident, which gave rise to an equivoque on his name.

“My master,” he said, “in the very act of running up stairs to my Lady Betty Bobwig’s dressing-room, with a pair of hot irons in one hand, and a patent periwig in the other,—steps awkward, and staircase dark,—tumbled over a d—d *bannister*, and broke his leg.

Lady B.—Poor fellow! I wish there were no *bannisters* in the world.

Fred.—In that case I should not have had the honour of waiting on your ladyship.

A similar equivocation had before been resorted to in “Blue Beard,” where, in Shacabac, he says, when going up stairs with Abomelique, “Oh, Mahomet! if ever you broke a bashaw’s neck over a *bannister*, now is your time:” but such witticisms are most frail, and dependent on very peculiar circumstances for effect. When Fawcett played the same part at Covent Garden, “staircase” was substituted for “*bannister*.”

“Of Age To-morrow” was performed thirty-six times, and produced ample profit to Bannister, and to Kelly, who shared in the adventure and composed the music. As Dibdin was under a restrictive engagement at Covent Garden, he could not accept of direct pecuniary remuneration; but he was not unrewarded. Bannister presented him with three drawings, and played several times at Richmond for Mrs. Dibdin’s benefit; and, from entries in his memorandum-books, I have reason to believe that his acknowledgments went to a greater extent.

To re-introduce Madame Mara on British boards

(11th March), Mr. Franklin produced an opera, "The Egyptian Festival ;" but the charms of music, the splendour of scenery, and the elegance of procession were combined in vain to animate a senseless bump of absurdity. Bannister played Longbow ; a cook without salt, a drunkard without spirit, and a conjuror without common sense ; a listless lover, and a hen-hearted coward.

Not more prosperous was a farce produced (28th April) for Bannister's benefit, named "Children ; or, Give them their way." The poor innocents were overlaid in one night.

Prince Hoare essayed a five-act comedy, which he called "Indiscretion." Bannister played Burley, a passionate, tender-hearted, rigid, flexible, rancorous, relenting old gentleman, whose daughter has eloped, who is naturally very angry, wants sadly to fight, puts himself into woman's clothes for no purpose, and is reconciled to his daughter without any good reason, but that the fifth act must end somehow, and there is no plot or story to delay the termination. The success of this piece was limited to six nights, and the author published it with a dedication to (Sir) Vicary Gibbs. Many readers will think that Mr. Cruise or Mr. Sugden might as well have dedicated their works on contingent remainders, or on vendors and purchasers, to Prince Hoare or to Jack Bannister ; but the great lawyer and elegant scholar

to whom the play was inscribed, was eminently worthy of such a compliment ; his knowledge of English dramatic literature was copious ; his ability as a critic acute, but not leaning to severity ; and they who have enjoyed the pleasure of his private conversation may recollect, with unbounded satisfaction, the humour and spirit with which he used to recite passages and scenes from some of our best comedies,—from “*The Beaux’ Stratagem*,” “*The Alchymist*,” and “*Twelfth Night*.”

In the course of the season, a few attempts were made in the higher department of the drama, but without conspicuous success. “*Adelaide*,” by Mr. Pye, the poet laureate, showed in every part that it was the production of a scholar and a man of taste ; but, although founded on an interesting portion of English history, and supported by Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, it was found flat and uninteresting, and soon withdrawn. Similar was the fate of Joanna Baillie’s tragedy of “*De Montfort* ;” which, although full of poetry and passion, and delightful to peruse, could, by all the efforts of the two great tragedians just mentioned, and all the strength of the company, be dragged forward only eight times. On the whole, it may be said, that Drury Lane did not this year exhibit one new drama conspicuous for its merit, or, except “*Of Age Tomorrow*,” for its success ; but it is rendered for ever

memorable by an event which, but for the interposed hand of Providence, would have plunged the whole nation in mourning and in woe.

His Majesty had commanded the performance of "She would and She would not;" and, immediately on his entering his box, a pistol was discharged at him by a man in the pit. Mr. Kelly, an eye-witness of the event, relates it in terms equally descriptive and correct.

"When the arrival of the King was announced," he says, "the band, as usual, played 'God save the King!' I was standing at the stage-door opposite the royal box, to see his Majesty. The moment he entered the box, a man in the pit, next the orchestra, on the right hand, stood up on the bench, and discharged a pistol at our august monarch as he came to the front of the box. Never shall I forget his Majesty's coolness: the whole audience was in an uproar. The King, on hearing the report of the pistol, retired a pace or two, stopped, and stood firmly for an instant; then came forward to the very front of the box, put his opera-glass to his eye, and looked round the house without the smallest appearance of alarm or discomposure.

"The late Marquis of Salisbury, then Lord Chamberlain, was behind his Majesty, in attendance in the box; and on hearing the report of the pistol, fearing some further attack might follow, respect-

fully requested his Majesty would retire from the box into an adjoining room. His Majesty's reply to him was, 'Sir, you discompose me as well as yourself: I shall not stir one step.' The Queen and Princesses then entered the box. On ascending the staircase, the Queen asked Mr. Sheridan what all the noise and uproar was about? He replied, it arose from some boys who had been firing off squibs. Hadfield, the ruffian who committed the crime, was seized by the performers in the orchestra, and dragged over its spikes into the music-room which was under the stage; the audience from all parts vociferating 'Bring forward the assassin!—bring him on the stage!—show him, show him!' I was at this moment on the stage. The Queen called me to her, and asked me if the man was in custody: I told her Majesty that he was secured. I then came forward and addressed the audience, assuring them that the culprit was in safe custody, undergoing an examination by his Royal Highness the Duke of York, Mr. Sheridan, and Sir William Addington; but, with the immense crowds about the doors and under the stage, in the confusion he might possibly escape, should they insist on his being brought forward. This appeal produced tranquillity. 'God save the King!' was called for, and received with shouts of applause, waving of hats, &c. During the whole of the play, the Queen and Princesses were

absorbed in tears : it was a sight never to be forgotten by those present. At the end of the play, ‘ God save the King ! ’ was again demanded by the whole house ; and, while we were singing it, a paper was sent to me by Mr. Sheridan, with a verse which he had written on the spur of the moment. It was handed to me by Mrs. Jordan, and I sang it, although with an agitated voice. It was as follows :

‘ From every latent foe,
From the assassin’s blow,
God save the King !

O’er him thine arm extend,
For Britain’s sake defend
Our father, prince, and friend.
God save the King !’

“ This stanza was three times repeated with the most rapturous approbation. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was assisting in the music-room at the examination, and evinced the most anxious solicitude and joy for the safety of his royal and august father. The play was Cibber’s comedy of ‘ She would and She would not.’ Never was a piece so hurried over, for the performers were all in the greatest agitation and confusion. When it concluded, his Majesty left the theatre, amidst the shouts of the audience within, and the enthusiastic cheers of the populace without.”

Often have I heard Bannister describe his sensa-

tions on the occasion ; the slovenly manner in which he and the rest of the performers hurried through their parts ; the inattention, trepidation, and confusion of the audience in all parts of the theatre ; while the only person who sat undisturbed, and in the full possession of his accustomed ease, was the object of all this anxious solicitude, the King himself.

At the close of the season, Bannister enjoyed, during a short engagement at Windsor, the smiles of his sovereign and of his amiable family,—the sovereign whose peril had so recently appalled, the Queen and Princessess, whose affectionate sensibility had so highly delighted him. He took for his benefit (23rd June), by command of his illustrious patron, “*The Liar*,” in which he played Young Wilding ; “*Sylvester Daggerwood*” and “*Ways and Means*,” in which he filled his usual characters. Harry Angelo lent his assistance on the occasion as Papillon, in “*The Liar* ;” and sung a comic solo-duet of “*Ballad-singers in Cranbourn Alley*,” not new at the time, and frequently repeated since as “*Both sides of the Gutter*,” and under other titles.

Bannister next appeared at the Dublin theatre, and with his usual success, and undiminished attraction played his best characters ; Munden was engaged at the same time, and the two comedians found their efforts rewarded by overflowing benefits.

At an early period of the year, Bannister had been invited to appear at Birmingham ; the advantages which were proffered will appear from the letter of Mr. Macready, the manager.

“ Edinburgh, Jan. 17th, 1800.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Yours arrived in the hurry of closing at Sheffield, and the preparation for a journey hither ; which, I hope, renders any apology unnecessary. I shall be glad to see you in Birmingham the beginning of the ensuing August, for a fortnight, on Mrs. Siddons’s and Mr. Kemble’s terms, viz. to share after forty-five guineas, and pay forty-five guineas for your benefit the last night of your performing ; or, if you prefer taking a clear benefit for the fortnight (eight nights), ’tis at your service.

“ Dear Sir,

“ Yours very truly,

“ W. MACREADY.”

Which of the proposed alternatives was accepted I am not able to ascertain ; but he played at Birmingham, and was most cordially received.

Bannister next appeared at Weymouth, where a company of considerable strength was collected, whose attractions were aided by some of the best performers from the metropolis, particularly himself,

Quick, and Munden. His reception at this place, the favourite summer retreat of the King, corresponded with the estimation in which he was known to be held by the royal family. I believe it was at this place, and on this occasion, (but the absence of dates leaves it in uncertainty as to time,) that he received the following obliging and condescending note.

“ Lady Charlotte Durham sends the words of ‘ Tom Tough ’ to Mr. Bannister, and will be very much obliged to him if he can manage to sing it in character.”

“ King’s Lodge, Tuesday.”

He was at Liverpool a few nights in the close of August and beginning of September, and had a benefit which produced one hundred and ninety-four pounds; and the account of his summer excursion ends at Plymouth, where fame and profit awaited him, as usual.

Before we come to the regular season at Drury Lane, it is necessary to notice an extra performance at the Haymarket, and to premise a few words on Charles Bannister.

This celebrated and highly esteemed veteran had now retired from the stage. Time had diminished, not extinguished his powers; they could still be

drawn out with considerable effect, but they were not sufficiently prompt to answer the purposes of nightly performance ; and there was besides, even in his best days, a hesitative timidity in his temperament, which always made him appear as if he were a mere novice, and quite unconscious of the reputation he had gained and the predilection he had inspired. He had, during several winters, been unengaged at Drury Lane, and now retired from the Haymarket also. Indeed, it had long been matter of regret to those who had known him filling the first vocal characters, who had seen the plans of operas deranged to introduce melodies suited to his abilities, and parts written and composed for no other purpose ; to find him now placed on the stage in the much humbler walk of the profession, and singing among the undistinguished crowd as a peasant, a muleteer, or a freebooter.

He was at this time not merely void of wealth, but, had it not been for the generous interference of his son, would have been unprovided with resources for his daily wants. It is not to be inferred that this state of his affairs was owing entirely to his own want of prudence, although he certainly never was gifted with any great portion of that quality. He had not broken suddenly from obscurity into renown, but had made a slow progress to eminence, after many years of meritorious exertion.

In his days, a London engagement was the performers' only resource : they did not make excursions into the country to aid their finances ; and there was little hope, out of the salaries then allowed, to make a reserve-fund for old age or infirmity. The character which Charles had formed for wit and good-fellowship cannot be created or sustained without considerable cost ; but there was nothing in his course of life which tended to precipitate ruin by striking imprudence or by reckless prodigality. When once a man gets into debt, the power of extricating himself is rarely indeed attained. The habit of taking what he desires, and calculating the means or time of payment, grows and extends itself beyond the scope of reasonable computation. Charles Bannister was used to give an account of his becoming embarrassed, in a way which, if not literally correct, had in it a great portion of evident truth. " When I played under Mr. Garrick," he said, " I had six pounds a week and a benefit, and I was then out of debt and an independent man. Afterward, I had fifteen pounds a week and a benefit, and I became needy and distressed. The reason was this. In Mr. Garrick's time, when Saturday night came, there were my six pounds on the treasurer's table, and I could pay all the urgent debts of the week. Afterwards I had to wait many weeks, perhaps to the end of the sea-

son, for my salary ; and so was under the necessity of dealing where I could get credit, but of course to a great disadvantage. Mr. Garrick's theatre held, when well filled, somewhat less than three hundred and fifty pounds ; other theatres would contain between six and seven hundred ; but the difference in a benefit at the two was very great indeed. Mr. Garrick's curtain drew up at an expense of sixty pounds at the most ; and if I came forward in a new character, or even advertised a new song, it would fill the house, and I should put nearly three hundred pounds into my pocket. In after times, the first two hundred guineas that were received went to pay expenses ; in order to gain that and a surplus, I was obliged to depend on my personal influence, and consequently to frequent clubs and live in taverns, a practice expensive in itself, and of bad consequence as a habit."

At this period of his life, Charles had no domestic establishment ; he had a lodging, but lived during the day at a tavern called the One Tun, or, more shortly, the Tun, in Saint James's Market. The house was remarkable for being the resort of wits and players, of sporting men of the higher class, and of many eminent and wealthy tradesmen in the neighbourhood. There was no regular club, no play, nor any allurements but lively conversation, with, occasionally, a song. The whimsical humour of the

frequenters distinguished two compartments of the room by the names of the needle-box and the marble-box, representing the comparative sharpness of those who frequented them. At the first, Charles Bannister held his regular seat ; and it was allotted to the choice personages of the society. The new pieces and new publications were discussed by some ; while others adjusted Newmarket differences, gave and received odds when their books were too heavy on one side or the other, and generally by their conversation showed that they were real needles. To the other box novices were generally introduced ; they were not insulted, but kindly received on all hands, although allowed to be only as sharp as marbles. To this scene old Charles, as he was called by his companions, constantly resorted, cheering them with his good-humour, entertaining them with his anecdotes and witticisms, and occasionally enlivening them with a song. Those which he retained to the last were, “ Rail no more, ye learned asses ; ” “ While happy in my native land ; ” and one, set by Carter, the composer of the never-to-be-forgotten “ Oh Nanny,” in an opera called “ Just in time,” beginning, “ When on board our trim vessel we joyously sailed.” Modern improvement has removed the Tun ; and I believe nothing like it exists.

He was enabled to meet the moderate expense required by this course of life, by the kindness and

care of his affectionate son. I speak not of sums contributed from his own funds, for on that head he never was communicative; but I know the fact from both parties. Beside the stipulated annuity already mentioned, Bannister, by his influence, was able annually to obtain from his friend Colman the gratuitous use of the theatre in the Haymarket, and to induce his brethren both on the boards and in the band to assist in making up a benefit, which was always sufficiently productive to liquidate outstanding claims and replenish the old gentleman's treasury.

On the 17th of November 1800, one of these benefits took place. Lord Nelson, just arrived in England, in the full blaze of his glory from the victory of the Nile, and raised to the peerage by the grace of his sovereign, at the desire of his grateful country, was requested to be present; for, as he had not yet attended at any public place, he would prove a powerful attraction. He complied; and, accompanied by Sir William and Lady Hamilton, occupied a stage-box. It was a gratifying and affecting sight to view the greatest of naval heroes supporting and encouraging the man who had given so much elevation to the nautical character by his feeling and manly delivery of those beautiful melodies which made the sailor not only the guardian, but the idol of his country. I particularly allude to those old

songs, in which Charles Bannister peculiarly excelled,—“The Storm,” “Brave Admiral Benbow,” and “Stand to your guns, my hearts of oak.” The audience (I was one) hailed this union of merit and patronage with the highest enthusiasm; everything was favourably received. Bannister played in three pieces, “Ways and Means,” “The Son-in-law,” and “The Children in the Wood.” His father could not do much; but, after Caulfield had offered his imitations of modern performers, Charles Bannister presented the contemporaries of his early days, according to those whose memory went back so far, with remarkable exactness. Barry, Woodward, Foote, and several others were exhibited with admirable effect; and everybody was pleased when, depressing his voice, and making a reverential bow, the veteran pronounced the name of the illustrious Mr. Garrick, and recited with great pathos a portion of the character of Lusignan.

Under the management of Kemble, Drury Lane opened (16th September) with “Hamlet.” Many novelties were presented; but those in which Bannister played were, in general, so void of merit and little encouraged by the town, that of several a very slight notice will suffice.

“Wilmore Castle,” a farce with songs, written by Mr. Hamilton, and composed by Mr. Hook, was produced (21st October) with the professed design of

reviving the English opera as left by Bickerstaff : but, far from reviving anything else, it had not sufficient vigour to prolong its own existence beyond a few nights ; and, on the first performance, it was generally thought it ought never to be exposed in a second. Smart, a man-milliner, a cockney of the most recent stamp, is brought down, as a postilion, to a castle where, according to the manners of the feudal ages, two persons are arbitrarily imprisoned by a military governor, whose garrison were habited in the fashion of Queen Anne's days. In the character of this cockney, Bannister had to sing and to talk, but to do nothing. The author appeared to calculate that, if his matter was all levity, his piece must be light ; forgetting the school-boy problem, that a pound of feathers is just as heavy as a pound of lead.

“ Virginia,” a comic opera, written and composed by Mrs. Plowden, the wife of an Irish barrister, exhibited Bannister for one night only (30th October) in the character of Captain Beauclerc. The fair authoress, a lady of considerable talent, did not bear her sentence of condemnation with equanimity. She published an address to the world, charging the manager with having caused the ill success of her opera ; the public never called on Kemble to reproduce it, and he, as usual, took no notice of the charge.

One dramatic failure, although Bannister did not appear in it, is entitled to notice, both because his name is connected with it, and from the lively and interesting manner in which its progress and fate are detailed by Mr. Sergeant Talfourd, partly in his own words, and, as to the residue, in those of his friend, Charles Lamb. "Mr. Godwin, whose powerful romance of Caleb Williams had supplied the materials for 'The Iron Chest' of Colman, naturally aspired, on his own account, to the glory of the scene, and completed a tragedy under the title of 'Antonio ; or, The Soldier's Return,' which was accepted at Drury Lane theatre, and announced for representation on Saturday, the 13th of December 1800. It was to come out in a feigned name, as one Tobin's; and Lamb supplied the epilogue, which, omitting the introductory lines connecting it with the play, concluded with a tale which is the mass and bulk of the composition. The name is Jack Incident.

Jack, of dramatic genius justly vain,
Purchas'd a renter's share at Drury Lane,
A prudent man in every other matter,—
Known at his club-room for an honest hatter.
Humane and courteous, led a civil life ;
And had been seldom known to beat his wife.
But Jack is now grown quite another man ;
Frequents the green-room, knows the plot and plan
Of each new piece,
And has been seen to talk with Sheridan !

In at the play-house just at six he pops,
 And never quits it till the curtain drops.
 Is never absent on the *author's night* :
 Knows actresses, and actors too,—by sight.
 So humble, that with Suett he'll confer,
 Or take a pipe with plain Jack Bannister ;
 Nay, with an author has been known so free,
 He once suggested a catastrophe :—
 In short, John dabbled till his head was turn'd.
 His wife remonstrated, his neighbours mourned ;
 His customers were dropping off apace ;
 And Jack's affairs began to wear a piteous face.

One night his wife began a curtain lecture :
 ' My dearest Johnny, husband, spouse, protector,
 Take pity on your helpless babes and me ;
 Save us from ruin, you from bankruptcy :
 Look to your business, leave these cursed plays,
 And try again your old industrious ways.'

Jack, who was always scar'd at the Gazette,
 And had some bits of skull uninjured yet,
 Promis'd amendment, vow'd his wife spake reason,
 ' He would not see another play that season.'
 Three stubborn fortnights Jack his promise kept ;
 Was late and early at his shop, ate, slept,
 And walk'd, and talk'd, like ordinary men,—
 No *wit*, but John the hatter once again.
 Visits his club, when lo ! one fatal night
 His wife, with horror, view'd the well-known sight—
 John's *hat*, *wig*, *snuff-box*,—well she knew his tricks,—
 And Jack decamping at the hour of six.
 Just at the counter's edge a play-bill lay,
 Announcing that 'Pizarro' was the play :—
 ' Oh ! Johnny, Johnny, this is your old doing !'
 Quoth Jack, ' Why, what the devil storm's a brewing ?'

About a harmless play why all this fright ?

I'll go and see it, if it's but for spite :

Zounds, woman ! Nelson's to be there to-night !'

“This was intended for Jack Bannister to speak, but the sage managers have chosen Miss Heard. Alas for human hopes ! The play was decisively damned, and the epilogue shared its fate. The tragedy turned out a miracle of dulness for the world to wonder at, although Lamb always insisted it had one fine line, which he was fond of repeating,—sole relic of the else forgotten play. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, the brother and sister of the drama, toiled through four acts and a half without applause or disapprobation ; one speech was not more vapid than another ; and so dead was the level of the dialogue, that, although its destiny was seen from afar, it presented no opportunity for hissing. But as the play drew towards a close, when after a scene of frigid chiding, not vivified by any fire of Kemble's own, Antonio drew his sword and plunged it into the heroine's bosom, the ‘sad civility’ of the audience vanished ; they started as at a real murder, and hooted the actors from the stage.”

A farce, called “The Veteran Tar,” written by Mr. S. J. Arnold, the music composed by his father Dr. Arnold, was more successful than either of these. It was performed several times, received with unbounded applause on the first night (2nd January 1801), and damned on the last. There is no plot ;

but the trick which was said to have been once practised on Sir Isaac Newton, is here played on a hungry farmer,—that, namely, of making him believe that he had devoured the chicken which another person had eaten while he was asleep. Tom Sturdy, the veteran tar, afforded abundant scope to the ability of Bannister. Parental love, affection for his vessel, manly sympathy, and an ardent fancy, are displayed in several of his speeches ; which were very effective, although composed, for the most part, of that land-lubberly jargon in which authors fancy they delineate the English sailor. An exception to this observation occurs where Tom Sturdy describes the vessel getting into action, coming to close quarters, boarding and capturing the enemy. With the exception of a word here and there, and a d—n me or two ridiculously thrown away, these speeches are excellent, animating, and affecting. The quaintness of some passages is offensive to good taste ; for instance, “Shiver my hulk ! but the blush of a maid on the morning of marriage is like the first glow of Aurora that promises a happy day.” It was the vice of the times to cram into the mouths of sailors such rubbish as this ; but Arnold redeemed his veteran by many observations of a much higher quality. In the following there is much beauty. “To be sure, I blushed just now when one of the crew popp’d upon

me as I was down on my knees. I was sending up a bit of a petition aloft for my boy's safety. What did I blush for? I don't think there's any harm in a sailor's saying his prayers ;—and, perhaps, the *Commander of all* may not hearken the less because the prayer comes from the mouth of a Veteran Tar."

Mr. Arnold dedicated the piece to his father ; and, in his preface, paid ample and sincere acknowledgments to Bannister for his delineation of Tom Sturdy.

Apprehensive, perhaps, that his name might be injurious to the reception of a play, Mr. Holcroft put on the stage (24th January), without an avowal, the drama of "Deaf and Dumb." Savage indeed must the prejudice have been which could resist the charms with which this piece assailed the mind. The story, the sentiment, the interest, the gradual and judicious developement of the final event, all contributed to produce an impulsive sensation not to be resisted by minds in the slightest degree capable of a virtuous emotion. The performers did more than justice to their parts ; they entered into them with the ardour of poets, and appeared to have studied them with the fondness of parents.

"'Deaf and Dumb' was taken from the French play of M. Bouilly, which was itself founded on an incident in the life of the famous Abbé De L'Epée,

instructor of the deaf and dumb. Julio, the heir of the Lord of Harancour, who is born deaf and dumb, is left an orphan when he is only eight years old ; and, the helplessness of his situation suggesting the possibility of getting rid of him, he is taken from Thoulouse to Paris by his guardian and maternal uncle, assisted by a servant in the family, and there left in the streets at night. Dupré, the accomplice of his uncle Darlemont, swears to his death ; and, at their return home, Darlemont is invested with the estates and honours of the house of Harancour. Meantime, poor Julio is found in the streets of Paris in a coarse dress, which does not denote him to be anything but a beggar ; and, it being discovered that he is deaf and dumb, he is taken to the asylum of the Abbé De L'Epée for children who are born with this defect. The melancholy observed in his countenance and manner, the delicacy of his complexion, and other circumstances, soon lead to a suspicion that he is the child of rich parents, and has been purposely lost by some person who wished to usurp his rights. He is taught the use of artificial signs, and learns to read and write. One day, being with De L'Epée when a judge is passing by dressed in his full robes, Julio is violently agitated, and makes signs to his instructor that his father used to be dressed in this manner. Another time, passing through the Bar-

rière d'Enfer, the recollection suddenly struck him that this was the very gate through which he had entered Paris. This produced a conviction in the mind of L'Epée that he came from some city in the south of France, of which, in all likelihood, his father had been chief magistrate. Yet, how to proceed in his behalf? The youth had never heard his father's name; he did not know his family, nor the place of his birth. After some ineffectual researches, De L'Epée resolves at last to take his pupil with him, and traverse in person, and on foot, the whole of the south of France. They embrace each other, invoke the protection of Heaven, and set forward. After a journey, long, fatiguing, and hopeless, they at length arrive at the gates of Thoulouse. Julio knows the place, seizes his benefactor's hand, and, uttering wild cries of joy, leads him quickly here and there through various quarters of the city. At last they come to the square where the palace of Harancour stands; he stops, points to the mansion, shrieks, and falls senseless into the arms of L'Epée. This is the foundation of the story."

Such is the correct account given in the *Memoirs* of Mr. Holcroft. "The rest," it is added, "may be easily divined by the reader;" it may; but, to save the trouble of putting on a conjuring-cap, it may be told in a few words. By the honourable perseverance of the good Abbé, the spirited inter-

vention of a noble-minded *avocat*, the accumulation of collateral proof, and the confession of an agent in the crime, the guilty Darlemont is driven from all the defences which his caution had provided. Convinced that the wealth he possesses, and the influence he boasts, cannot ensure his success in a trial; that perseverance in the path which pride and obstinacy indicate, will only lead to exposure and infamy; he yields after a violent internal conflict, acknowledges the identity and rights of his nephew, and surrenders the estate he has so long usurped. A marriage, and a cession of half the property by the amiable orphan, form a happy termination of the piece.

It is impossible for the dramatic art to exceed the excellences which marked this performance. Kemble, in *De L'Epée* was a model of a new species of character. Tranquil in himself, yet carried by virtue alone to the highest pitch of heroic action, he is benevolent, not only without ostentation, but with an apparent unconsciousness that he is stepping beyond the limits usually attained by the followers of humanity and piety; his zealous affection for the orphan is pure as that which a guardian angel might be supposed to display toward the frail being committed by Providence to his care; his narrative of the child's introduction to him, and the progress of his judgment in discovering his origin and place of nativity, is free from every trace of egotism or

vanity ; not a sentence, not a syllable, invites or even permits a compliment to his generosity or his sagacity. In advancing the just claims of his unfortunate pupil, he seems to be borne above the region of human weakness or passion ; his remonstrance is free from rage, his reasoning undefaced by taunt or sarcasm. Yet, notwithstanding the absence of all those resources which are so often used to excite the feelings of an audience, every word he uttered produced a corresponding emotion of the heart ; all was sympathy, approbation, delight in tracing the course of this character. With the highest efforts of Kemble's histrionic genius,—with his Hamlet, Macbeth, and Rolla,—may justly be ranked the unobtrusive, energetic, patient, persevering, benevolent Abbé De L'Epée.

In Darlemont, Wroughton displayed a treasure of dramatic power, which they who had not known him in his earlier days would hardly believe him to possess. He represented a man in whom a factitious bubble, composed of pride, self-will, anger, and obstinacy,—miscalled honour,—is substituted for that firm, generous, manly principle, the dignified offspring of innocence and virtue, which truly and only deserves the name. His struggles between conscious guilt and inflated pride, the fear of detection and the hope of impunity, produced an interesting exhibition ; and I have been well informed, that Mr. Fox, whose taste and judgment none could doubt,

and whose experience gave additional value to his opinion, declared that he had never witnessed a performance more perfect than that of Mr. Wroughton.

But the interesting cause of all these efforts, the deaf and dumb Julio, remains to be mentioned. In this part, Miss De Camp carried the public sensibility to its highest point, and evinced her own correct judgment and impressive feeling. Forbidden the use of speech, or even of an exclamation, she never permitted herself to solicit applause by an attitude, a distortion of feature, or the slightest gesture inconsistent with the chaste simplicity befitting her character. In using the mode of communicating her ideas, and acknowledging her perceptions, which the Abbé had taught her, everything was natural, easy, graceful: no cunning look of self-applause, no nod, no wink, no pointing of the finger, none of the tricks, in short, which a vulgar-minded performer would have delighted in, disgraced her representation: her love, her gratitude, her obedience, were shown by natural and impressive gestures; and, as the first glimmer of discovery expanded into the full blaze of irresistible conviction, her manner, her action, her looks, all beamed forth additional sensibility and joy. After her incomparable dumb performance, the audience listened with pleasure to the tones of her sweet voice in a smart epilogue.

Dupré, the part assigned to Bannister, was a ser-

vant of Darlemont, the accomplice and agent of his crime. A wounded conscience, a sincere repentance, and a conviction that it may be useful in terminating the sufferings of innocence, impel him, after some scenes of lamentation and reproach, to make a full disclosure ; thus confirming all antecedent discoveries. The part was altogether unworthy of Bannister, and he resigned it after the first season.

One more new piece, "Adelmorn, the Outlaw," a romantic drama,—for so the author is pleased to call it,—was received with applause, and had a moderate run. It was by Mr. Lewis, and marked with his characteristics,—a wild imagination, the power of exciting a vivid interest ; characters and events often surprising, although seldom new ; aided by dialogue in which bombast was frequently substituted for sublimity, and pertness for wit, yet not destitute altogether of the genuine metal which the counterfeit was employed to represent. On the first night (4th May) some absurdities and redundancies, some confusion in detailing the events, and some accidents which happened to the scenery and actors, rendered the safety of the piece for a time doubtful ; but by the skill and vigour of the performers, it was steered through the breakers, and sailed for its day on the broad ocean of the drama. Bannister played Lodowick, a servant of Adelmorn, made up of the usual

component parts of such a personage. He is faithful and fearful, hungry, drunken, cunning, silly, and all manner of things that are pleasant and popular in such parts ; there is nothing that can disgust while he is present, nothing that can make one desire to see him again. Toward the close, he is instrumental in detecting the guilty, and preserving the innocent ; but, after all, when he embraced his wife, and they retired together, every one was disposed to say "*Bon repos !*" The music, by Kelly, was highly and deservedly esteemed.

In addition to these pure novelties, Bannister played in the course of the season several parts that were new to him, in established or revived comedies,—Captain Ironsides, in Cumberland's "Brothers ;" Aircastle, in Foote's "Cozeners ;" Witwoud, in Congreve's "Way of the World," altered by Kemble ; and Sancho, in "Lovers' Quarrels," altered from Vanburgh by King : but as no one of these was eminently favoured by the town, or materially connected with the reputation of Bannister, they are merely mentioned.

In the summer, Bannister had no engagement at the Haymarket ; I find him performing at Birmingham, where, during the stay of Miss De Camp, he assumed Kemble's part of the Abbé De L'Epée : in this it may be supposed that he was rather urged by the demands of a country manager, than impelled by

the workings of his own ambition. Such a character could not be less than interesting in his hands, but the recollection of Kemble would necessarily intrude itself into the mind of every one who had seen the piece at Drury Lane.

Liverpool theatre, under the judicious and spirited management of Mr. Aickin, formed a general rendezvous for the talent of the metropolis, and Bannister appeared there in this summer with applause and with profit: his benefit, the fourth in amount on the whole list, produced two hundred and fourteen pounds.

For his father's annual benefit at the Haymarket (7th October), he played Sir David Dunder, Peeping Tom, and Bowkitt, characters in which he was well known and always well received.

CHAPTER XXII.

1801—1802—1803.

Mrs. Billington engaged at both houses.—The Anatomist.—Bannister in *Crispin*.—*Urania*; or, *The Illuminé*.—*Lovers' Resolutions*, by Cumberland.—Bannister in *Sir Bashful Constant*.—Playhouse shut on the Funeral of the Duke of Bedford.—King retires,—his last appearance,—respectful conduct of the performers.—Charles Bannister's Annual Benefit.—Bannister goes to Guernsey,—Weymouth,—Plymouth,—and Richmond.—Drury Lane.—Board of Management.—Bannister, Acting Manager.—Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons leave Drury Lane.—Mr. Stephen Kemble in *Falstaff*.—Address on the occasion, spoken by Bannister,—who plays *Launcelot Gobbo*.—*Ancient Pistol*.—*Bobadil*.—A House to be sold.—Difficulty of eating upon the stage.—*The Hero of the North*.—Melo-drama first introduced.—*Holcroft's Tale of Mystery*.—Hear both sides.—Bannister in *Transit*.—Allingham's *Marriage Promise*.—Bannister in *Tandem*.—*Busy Body*.—Letter of Mrs. Jordan.—Their benefits.—Haymarket.—Mrs. Gibbs's benefit — and C. Bannister's.—Glasgow.—Edinburgh.—Berwick.—Harrowgate.—Leeds.—Letter of General Phipps.—Brighton.

IN the ensuing winter, the two theatres presented an unusual aspect. Mrs. Billington, having established her reputation as an unrivalled singer in Italy, and other parts of the Continent, now returned to England, after an absence of seven years, in the full charm of her appearance, in the complete pos-

session of her powers, and in the zenith of her renown. After a competition of some duration, the managers of the two theatres agreed to divide her attraction; she appeared at both alternately, exercising unlimited control over the judgment and feelings of the audience, and delighting the public with a display of unrivalled powers in the genuine, tasteful, and interesting department of the English opera.

She occasionally embellished her characters by the introduction of bravuras, calculated to show the extent of her voice; but the basis was untouched, and Mandane, Rosetta, Clara, and Polly remained in substance what their authors had intended. She was always rapturously welcomed by crowded houses, and her exertions were extended to the Italian as well as the English theatres.

Bannister's novelties during this season were neither numerous nor particularly interesting. The revival of a very old and often altered farce, "The Anatomist; or, The Sham Doctor," presented him in the part of Crispin, a tricksy, chattering valet, who, after personating a corpse intended for dissection, finds himself under the necessity of pretending to be a physician. The situations in which he is placed produce some merriment; but there is little in the piece to apologize for its existence, much less to require its revival.

Mr. William Robert Spencer, son of Lord Charles Spencer, a gentleman of considerable talents and extensive acquirements, particularly in modern languages, produced (22nd January 1802) a comedy in two acts, for so he termed it, under the name of "Urania ; or, The Illuminé." The idea, as he informs us, was derived from a German play, of which the name and substance are unknown : the plot is meagre, the conduct inartificial, and the dialogue not interesting,—bombastic and extravagant in the serious, forced and feeble in the comic part. The author liberally and candidly acknowledges that "Urania" owed much of its success to the attractions of the music, the exertions of the performers, and the friendship and advice of a manager (Mr. Kemble) "who dignifies a liberal profession by joining to all the perfection of his art every accomplishment of a scholar and a gentleman."

Of the songs, which are not many, some were composed, it is said, by the author's brother. One, which was principally attractive, was set by Kelly ; it is a free imitation of Anacreon, and was exquisitely sung by Mrs. Bland. Among the performers, a large portion of praise devolves on Miss De Camp, who, in a part which required a human being to represent an ethereal spirit, effected an illusion which was not only capable of deceiving an enthusiastic illuminé, but almost of creating doubts in the minds

of the audience. Pietro, the character assigned to Bannister, is merely a pert, not witty, serving-man, of little use in the main plot, and the hero of a very ordinary under-plot ; that is to say, without much difficulty or any contrivance, he marries an inn-keeper's daughter. Lord John Townshend contributed a well-written prologue, which was delivered by Bannister with great effect. There is much whimsical vivacity in the following lines :

“ Our piece to-night may brave the critic host ;
In truth, Urania is but half a ghost ;
Of fairy form, but not of spectre brood,
A living vision, warm with vital blood !
Critics, ungentle critics, be polite ;
And, if not fond, be civil the first night !
Then comes the test !—then comes Urania's danger !
Then,—when the lady is no more a stranger.”

In a comedy by Cumberland, called “ *Lovers' Resolutions*,” Bannister performed (2nd March) the part of Worthiman ; but, as the critics were not “ civil the first night,” the author withdrew the piece, and it would be useless to pursue it with observations.

These were all the original characters which Bannister performed this season. He appeared also as *Mercutio*, *Autolychus*, and in one or two other established parts, but without any striking effect. In *Sir Bashful Constant* he made a more lasting impression. This extraordinary character, carried

to the extreme verge of dramatic probability, afforded great scope to his powers. The fond, liberal, confiding husband, ashamed of his own virtues lest they should be derided as weaknesses, makes himself, in a series of well-imagined scenes, the dupe, or rather the agent and instrument, of an unprincipled married libertine, who, abusing his confidence, bribes his lady with money and gifts which the husband has supplied as marks of his affection, and, by suppressing one letter and substituting another, makes him avow and patronize a plot framed for his own dishonour. The steady virtue and good sense of Lady Constant foil the attempts of two intriguers; and her husband, perfectly subdued by her merits, renounces his feeble fears of public ridicule, and acquiesces in the observation that, "when a husband will be ashamed of loving a valuable woman, he must not be surprised if other people take her case into consideration, and love her for him." The various points of goodness and absurdity in the character of Sir Bashful, were powerfully displayed by Bannister; his uneasy jealousy of ridicule, and utter want of self-confidence, always afforded a rich scene of genuine comedy. The play was revived (10th May) for his benefit, after a quiescence of twelve years; but it was often repeated, and a great favourite with the town.

On the whole, the season at Drury Lane was

not productive either of fame or profit. Two incidents deserve to be mentioned. On occasion of the funeral of Francis, Duke of Bedford, their ground-landlord, (11th March,) the managers closed the house ; a decent tribute of respect to his memory.

Broken by age, and oppressed by infirmity, Tom King was now to retire from his long and glorious dramatic service. Apprised of his intention, the King and Queen (6th May) gratified their own excellent taste, and showed their just estimation of the veteran performer, by commanding his last appearance in *Lord Ogleby*, a character peculiarly and exclusively his own. For his final benefit, he played *Sir Peter Teazle* ; in which, although he exhibited great talent, yet he showed that his resolution to retire was not prematurely adopted. He delivered an address, written for him by Cumberland, in a superior strain of poetry, in which, after announcing his own “dramatic death” on that night, he proceeded :

“Patrons, farewell !—

Though you still kindly my defects would spare,
Constant indulgence who would wish to bear ?
Who, that retains the scenes of brighter days,
Can sue for pardon while he pants for praise ?
On well-earn'd fame the mind with pride reflects,
But pity sinks the man whom it protects.
Your fathers had my strength ; my only claim
Was zeal ; their favour was my only fame.

Of late, too often, when the whole was due,
I've paid half service to the Muse and you.
Not what I was, I now decline the field,
And ground those arms which I but feebly wield."

Charles Kemble, with a respectful benevolence which would have adorned the character of a son, attended him on the stage during this address, to supply, had it been necessary, any failures of memory ; and, at its close, Mrs. Jordan, with characteristic kindness, led him into the green-room. Here his affectionate companions had prepared for him a silver cup, which, with a proper speech, was tendered to his lips by his amiable conductress : it had been purchased out of a contribution of the principal performers ; and, beside their names, was inscribed with the lines from *Henry the Fifth*—

"If he be not fellow with the best King,
You shall find him the best King of good fellows."

After a dramatic course of more than half a century, in which manners, forms, and associations had undergone a complete change, it would be vain to pursue the career of this admirable actor through all its varieties. In his earlier days he was celebrated as a performer of characters replete with audacious knavery and astuteness, and he was unrivalled as a speaker of prologues ; from the time when he gave his own peculiar tone and colouring to *Lord Ogleby*, his talents were fully appreciated. That

character, Sir Peter Teazle, Touchstone, and Puff, were always unalienably his; and, as in them he never had a rival, it may without offence to subsequent performers be said, that he has never had a successor capable of displacing him from the memory.

In the autumn (6th October) Bannister appeared, as usual, for his father's annual benefit at the Haymarket, in Sir David Dunder and Walter; but, in the mean time, he had made an active, although not extensive, provincial tour.

His first excursion was to the isle of Guernsey. He had entered into an engagement with the manager of the Weymouth theatre, but went with him first to the island, where he was performing with success, when the arrival of the royal family suddenly recalled them.

Under the flattering auspices of his illustrious patrons, Bannister played Feignwell and Scout; Acres and Jobson; Dr. Pangloss, in "The Heir at Law," and Frederick, in "Of Age To-morrow;" Marplot and Peeping Tom; cheered and rewarded by the hearty favour and unrestrained delight which he never failed to enjoy from his partial and liberal royal admirers.

His engagement at Weymouth admitted only of the four performances already mentioned, as it commenced on the 7th of July, and he was engaged to appear

at Plymouth on the 14th ; following Mr. Winston, who had made a very favourable impression as a comedian in many popular characters. At this place, beside Bannister, Cooke, H. Johnston, and Miss Dixon were produced as stars (so they are called in the theatrical dictionary); but as, on the star-illuminated nights, the prices in all parts but the gallery were raised ; the reluctance of the public to acquiesce in this mode of arbitrary taxation extorted from the manager the observation, that while his old-price seats were thronged, all the rest were comparatively deserted. Bannister's excursions terminated in his customary visit to Richmond; where for, and greatly to, the benefit of Mrs. Dibdin, he performed Gregory Gubbins in " The Battle of Hexham."

At the opening of Drury Lane, on the 16th of September 1802, great alterations, materially affecting the interests of the theatre, had taken place. A board of management was established, at the head of which was Aaron Graham, Esq. a police magistrate, who, if not eminently endowed with dramatic literature, was a man of good society ; he had been in the naval service, and was well received in the polite world. He had for coadjutors his brother magistrate, Sir Richard Ford, Mr. Richard Wilson, an eminent attorney, and secretary to the Lord Chancellor, Alderman Coombe, and Mr. Mor-

ris, a barrister and dramatic author. It was hoped that, by activity, punctuality, and economy, this executive directory would repair some of the defects complained of in the former government. A composition so miscellaneous might, if the parties had entered into rivalry, or even if they had endeavoured to act in concord, have produced some difficulties; but, wisely, they left almost everything to the conduct of Mr. Graham. Tom Dibdin was stage manager, Bannister acting manager, and the musical department was confided to Kelly.

With all this arrangement of a government, it was soon found that the main pillars of the state were removed. Kemble had negotiated, during the early part of the year, a purchase of a portion of the theatre, but, as a satisfactory title could not be made, no contract was concluded. At Covent Garden he found means to effect a secure, if not beneficial purchase, and there he became a proprietor. As I am not writing the life of Mr. Kemble, it is not for me to discuss the question of prudence, or analyze the operations of ambition in his mind; but, as a remark more of general application than of mere personal reference to himself, I may be permitted to declare the step erroneous in policy, and inconsistent with sound judgment. Kemble's noble mind was formed for ambition, and therefore probably the calculation of mere profit was not

pursued with much accuracy, when counterpoised by the allurements of possessing, for so he ultimately hoped, a theatre of his own. But Kemble ought to have considered, more deeply than he appears to have done, the disadvantages to be incurred at his age, by quitting an establishment where, for twenty years, he had been acquiring fame and profit, to become at once the head of a rival property. Justice, truth, or reason would not guide or limit the censures which this change would produce: he was sufficiently eminent to be envied, sufficiently blameless to be hated, and to the unprincipled throng, who for these reasons would delight in goading and wounding him, he might infallibly add those mean echoes of vulgar malignity whose "sweet voices" never sound so charmingly in their own ears as when they reverberate terms of vituperation on those whose superiority would otherwise reduce them to despair. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were therefore withdrawn from Drury Lane, although they did not for the present appear at Covent Garden; and Charles Kemble, after a season passed in great uneasiness, united himself to them.

It was a curious coincidence, that, as Stephen Kemble had originally been produced at Covent Garden to anticipate the reception of John at Drury Lane, he was now called in at Drury Lane to supply some attraction instead of that which his

accomplished brother had been used to afford. He appeared (7th October 1802), in "The First Part of Henry the Fourth," as Falstaff; and, his bulk always incommodious, had now so much increased, that, among the motives which drew several full houses to his performance, might be included the expectation of seeing an actor play the fat knight without stuffing. To prepare the public for his appearance, he wrote some introductory lines, which, with great effect, were delivered by Bannister.

" A Falstaff here to-night, by Nature made,
Lends to your favourite bard his *pond'rous* aid.
No man in buckram he, no stuffing gear,
No feather-bed, nor e'en a pillow-bier!
But all good honest flesh, and blood, and bone,
And weighing—more or less—some *thirty* stone.
Upon the northern coast by chance we caught him,
And hither in a *broad-wheeled waggon* brought him;
For in a *chaise* the varlet ne'er could enter,
And no *mail-coach* on such a fare would venture.
Blest with unwieldiness, at least his *size*
Will favour find in every critic's eyes;
And should his humour, and his mimic art,
Bear due proportion to his *outward part*,
As once 'twas said of Macklin, in the Jew,
' *This is the very Falstaff Shakspeare drew!*
To you, with diffidence, he bids me say,
Should you approve, you may command his stay,
To lie and swagger here another day:
If not, to better men he'll leave his sack,
And go as ballast in a *collier* back."

Stephen Kemble's engagement was not of long duration. On its last night (15th December) he appeared, without much applause, in Shylock ; and spoke a valedictory address, which he himself had also written. Bannister acted Launcelot Gobbo with much humour, but he was not made for the part.

Once (26th October) Stephen Kemble played Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and Bannister appeared as Ancient Pistol. This character, one of Shakspeare's happiest comic effusions, and continued by him through four plays, is seldom adequately supported on the stage. The reason probably is, that he is always thrown into the background by the superior qualities of those who are on the scene with him, particularly in the "First Part of Henry the Fourth," and "The Merry Wives," or by the overwhelming interest of the plot, as in "Henry the Fifth" and he has no personal quality ; which, when he leaves the stage, makes us wish for his return. Yet, as a picture of a cowardly audacious bully, the mere scum of Alsatia, a pretender to courage, feeling, honour, and literature, without the least atom of either, his character is invaluable. His language made up of ill-selected scraps from bad plays and trivial ballads ; his ideas always burlesque and extravagant ; his mighty boasts and affected punctilios ending in a broken head and a

determination to turn cut-purse ;—all these, and many more circumstances, form the sum of an exquisitely comic delineation. To exhibit it in perfection, a performer should possess a tall person, an ample stride, a thundering voice, a large lack-lustre eye, and a gaunt famine-struck appearance. Whatever accuracy there might be in his conception, Bannister did not possess these requisites ; and Pistol, in “ The Merry Wives,” is more insignificant than in any other play in which the great author has produced him.

High above this beggarly ancient in personal character, although far below him in variety and richness of humour, is the braggart Bobadil. This part Bannister played (10th December) ; but, as the piece was not in general strongly cast, it had no power to attract the town : it was at the same time in a course of exhibition at Covent Garden, with Cooke in Kitley, and was therefore only attempted twice at Drury Lane.

In an excursion to Paris, Kelly saw, at the Théâtre Feydeau, a farce with songs, “ *La Maison à vendre.*” He obtained, and gave it to Cobb, who sent a translation to Drury Lane, where it was acted (17th November) under the title of “ A House to be sold.” Aided by some pretty music which Kelly selected and composed, and sustained by the powerful exertions of first-rate performers in

insignificant characters, the piece was played about eleven nights. Bannister represented Charles Kelson, a warm-hearted, rattle-pated sailor, who, without a shilling in possession or expectancy, buys a house for five thousand pounds, and sells it again to a Jew for eight thousand ; and most extraordinarily, except in a farce, the son of Abraham pays that large sum of money, without a conveyance or anything to show for it. Bannister's exertions were noticed by the author in a particular manner. Avowing that the flattering success of the piece was greatly owing to the manager, the composer, and the performers, he adds : " Frequent have been the occasions upon which the author has found his acknowledgments due to his friend, Mr. Bannister : once more he has to own his particular obligations to that excellent comedian, whose talents on the stage are equalled by his respectability in private life."

One circumstance, not generally known, is communicated by Kelly on occasion of this farce. " There was a supper scene," he says, " in which I was obliged to eat part of a fowl ; Bannister told me at rehearsal, what I then could hardly believe,—that it was very difficult to eat and swallow food on the stage. But, strange as it may appear, I found it a fact, for I could not get down a morsel ; my embarrassment was a great source of fun to Ban-

nister and Suett, who were both gifted with the accommodating talent of stage-feeding : whoever saw poor Suett in the lawyer, in ‘No Song, no Supper,’ tucking in his boiled leg of lamb, or in ‘The Siege of Belgrade,’ will be little disposed to question my testimony to this fact.”

“The Hero of the North,” by Mr. Dimond (19th February 1803), was a musical drama of a mixed character ; heroic action, deciding the fate of a nation, being mingled with low life and humorous incident. The story of Gustavus Vasa was not new to the stage ; but the young dramatist, if he could not raise it altogether above the reach of criticism, contrived to make it impressive and interesting, and it was performed in the season twenty times. Bannister, after Gustavus and the great heroes and heroines, occupied the most prominent situation, and his part was well adapted to his powers. He was Marcoff, a peasant, with a wife sufficiently pretty to attract the regards of the governor of an impregnable fortress, and lead him to his ruin ; he was brave, secret, faithful, talkative, good-humoured ; his cottage was a depôt of arms, kept concealed, to be brought forth in the cause of his sovereign ; and he was the centre of action and communication to a brave, loyal body of peasants, burning to use the weapons he had accumulated to their best purpose. The author, in his preface,

acknowledges his obligations to Bannister, as a manager as well as a performer.

Mr. Holcroft had augmented the stores of dramatic entertainment by producing (13th November), at Covent Garden, "The Tale of Mystery." It was called a melo-drame, and comprised speaking, music, and dumb show. As well by the interest of the fable and the merit of the writing, as by the great skill and ability of the performers, it became a general favourite. Many pieces afterward appeared under the same denomination ; but it may safely be pronounced that the "Tale of Mystery," as it was the first, so it is incomparably the best melo-drame that the English stage has produced.

Shortly afterward (29th December), the same author exhibited, at Drury Lane, a moral, sentimental comedy, "Hear both sides." It had a temporary, and neither more nor less than a just, success. The dialogue was sufficiently spirited, and the characters sufficiently interesting, to avert immediate condemnation ; but there were faults in the structure of the drama, improbabilities in the events, and a weariness arising from the explication of some unintelligible combinations in the plot, which were of abundant power to prevent it from being a permanent favourite. The author, rendered sour, perhaps, by occasional failures, and sensitive by harsh and wanton attacks, complains, in his preface, of the

manner in which the diurnal critics had treated his play, terming it a sombre, (that was their word, as Pamela says,) sermonizing drama. With great dexterity, he turns these censures to his own credit, by saying, that such paragraphs ought not to have been addressed to him, but to the successive audiences who had received the comic parts with bursts of laughter, and the serious scenes with deep attention and unceasing applause.

Among the comic parts on which the author rests his title to fame, the most prominent is that of *Transit*, played by Bannister; one of those medleys of desperate need and prodigal liberality, of hopeless circumstances and unextinguishable hilarity, to which that actor could always impart a lively interest that would make us swallow gross improbabilities, and witness, without disapprobation, a departure from all the general rules by which man regulates his conduct. He also delivered a prologue, written by the author, in which, alluding to a late ærial expedition and descent by means of a parachute, the slight distinction is shown which exists between *Rashness* and *Enterprise*, until success or failure assigns to an act the accepted denomination.

Mr. John Till Allingham put on the stage (16th April) a comedy in five acts, called “*The Marriage Promise*.” He says, in a note in my possession, “The author had given up all thoughts of writing

for the stage ; but was invited by Mr. Bannister, the acting manager, to write a comedy for Drury Lane. ‘The Marriage Promise’ was then brought forward, and acted twenty-one nights in succession ; those excepted which were appointed for benefits.” The author was not a novice in theatrical matters, for he had already produced two farces which were well received ; but he did not show a genius adequate to the details of a regular comedy. The plot is labour-ed out with more difficulty than it is worth : Bannister had the chief enlivening character, that of Tandem, a bustling, busy, self-conceited steward, who, after detailing his qualifications as a man of business, sums up his *agrémens* by saying, “anything in my way to make myself agreeable ; a morning’s chat, or an afternoon’s soak—a pipe and a game at cribbage—backgammon, bowls, or billiards—politics or mensuration—take a part in a catch or a glee—play the fiddle for a country dance, a hornpipe, or a Scotch reel—draw a lease, or make your wills—crack a joke—puns and conundrums—nothing comes amiss.—I am a church and king man, and a good shot.”

Well would it have been, and more congenial to the talents of Bannister, if Mr. Tandem’s character had been no otherwise distinguished ; but, in the course of the piece, he shows himself a base, vindictive, unprincipled villain, one in whom levity and blunders are utterly unbecoming and disgusting.

Mrs. Jordan (9th December) played Miranda, in "The Busy Body," for the first time, Bannister re-appearing in Marplot. This fact is mentioned only to introduce a letter from that exquisite actress and amiable lady, which will show the cordial terms on which he lived with those around him.

"I am sure you will be glad to hear that my dear little girl is so much better to-night, that Sir John Hayes has pronounced her quite out of danger. I shall, therefore, be ready for to-morrow's rehearsal at eleven o'clock, and also to play Miranda. The Duke, as well as myself, is most obliged to you for your kind concern and attention, which I shall ever think of with pleasure and gratitude.

"Yours,

"D. JORDAN."

These excellent performers undertook new characters for each other's benefit. Mrs. Jordan acted (2d April) Belinda, in "All in the Wrong," while he was Sir John Restless; and, on her night (9th May), he played Nicholas, in "The Midnight Hour."

At the Haymarket he appeared twice only: first, (26th August,) for Mrs. Gibbs's benefit, as Job Thornberry, in Colman's admirable "John Bull," which in subsequent seasons he often repeated; and again, on his father's annual night, (15th October,) as Lazarillo, in "The Spanish Barber."

In the summer, Bannister went to Glasgow, where he played twelve nights, to houses always crowded and audiences constantly delighted. He ran the circle of his most admired characters, and, when he departed, his loss was truly regretted. His appearance on one night at this theatre, on this occasion, was attended with an incident which shows his character to advantage, and I shall relate it in the very words (I cannot find better) of Mr. Bartley, who was an eye-witness. "Mr. Mattocks (husband of the celebrated actress) was the acting manager for Mr. Jackson. Bannister and he had long known each other. His benefit was to take place during Bannister's engagement; and the old gentleman fancied that, if he would perform young Norval, it would excite curiosity and fill the house; the play of 'Douglas,' (or rather 'The Douglas Tragedy,' as it is called in Scotland,) being always interesting to a Caledonian audience. Somewhat reluctantly, Bannister consented. He got great applause, and recited some passages most beautifully, although he certainly did not look the 'young eaglet.' The house was full, and, in addition to the produce of the performance, Bannister enclosed the amount of his nightly pay (a handsome sum) to Mr. Mattocks, as the price of a box ticket. I saw the old gentleman, with the letter in one hand, come up to Bannister on the stage, and, holding out the

other, he thanked his old acquaintance, with tears in his eyes, for his liberality. The act was creditable to Bannister's feelings; for Mattocks, who in his youth had flourished among the wits and men of fashion, was at this time in circumstances very far from affluent."

Bannister performed also, during this tour, at Edinburgh, Berwick, and Harrowgate, and made a short stay at Leeds, where he played a few nights. While there, he received from General Phipps a letter which it is pleasant to transcribe, as it affords a proof of the estimation in which he was held by persons of high rank and consideration, and is a model of that warm, kind, condescending style, by which, without any real sacrifice of their own dignity, the superior class of society can render their countenance and favours inestimable.

"Harewood House, Sunday, July 19.

"DEAR JACK,

"I wrote to you last Monday, by Lord Harewood's desire, to invite you to dine here and take a bed. As I received no answer, I fear you did not get my note. I had written thus far when I received your letter. Lord Harewood desires me to tell you, he hopes to see you here for a day, if you can spare one, when you come to Harrowgate, which is only eight miles from this place.

I am always pleased, but never surprised, to hear of your playing to crowded houses. Nobody has, or deserves, more friends than you have, in doors and out. You will find me here, as I make some stay. May you long ‘smell the lamp’ and the country air, and long enjoy health, wealth, and happiness, is the earnest wish of your sincere friend,

“E. PHIPPS.”

His only remaining excursion was to Brighton, where he performed (16th September) for the benefit of his sister, Mrs. Swendall.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1803—1804.

Drury Lane.—Johnstone engaged;—how he came to play Irish characters.—The Wife of Two Husbands;—Johnstone plays Arnagh,—Bannister, Carronade.—Spirit of the Times.—Expressions of loyalty.—Volunteers.—Hearts of Oak, by Allingham,—Bannister in Ten-per-cent.—The Caravan,—Bannister in Blabbo.—The Dog.—The Soldier's Daughter,—Bannister and Mrs. Jordan in Frank Heartall and the Widow Cheerly.—The Counterfeit, by Franklin,—Bannister in Addle.—Cumberland's Sailor's Daughter,—Bannister in Hartshorn.—The Middle Dish.—Hunt the Slipper,—Bannister, Billy Bristle.—He retires from the management;—he appears at the Haymarket.—The Heir at Law.—Letter of Colman.—Bannister plays Pangloss,—Job Thornberry,—and Caleb Quotem,—Hodge, and several other established characters;—Ramble, in Foul Deeds will rise;—Pegasus Puncheon, in Gay Deceivers.—Charles Bannister's last benefit,—his death,—abilities,—bon-mots.

AT Drury Lane the managers strengthened their company by engaging Jack Johnstone, so justly celebrated, so unrivalled, in Irish characters. He appeared (20th September 1803) as Murtoch Delaney, in "The Irishman in London;" Bannister performing the busy, intriguing, confident footman, Edward.

Johnstone came upon the London stage in 1783,

and, having what in those days was considered a fine voice, was put forward in first characters in English operas ; and some critics went so far as to censure him for not attempting tragedy, for which they thought him eminently adapted by his person, action, and voice in speaking. I have often heard him relate how he came to perform those parts on which his fame was so securely founded ; he told it nearly in this manner :

“ I was in the green-room one day when Mr. Macklin was there, and, like the rest of the young performers, had listened to him with respect and attention, when, on a sudden, he turned toward me, and said, ‘ Young man, you will breakfast with me to-morrow ? ’ I answered, ‘ Certainly, sir ; I shall consider it a high honour. ’ I went ; and, after our meal, he pointed to a bundle of papers, and said, ‘ Young man, reach me that. ’ I did so, and it was ‘ Love à-la-mode, ’ in manuscript. ‘ Read that, sir, ’ he said, marking out the part of Sir Callaghan O’Brallachan. When I had finished, and, in answer to his question, expressed my great admiration, ‘ You shall play it, sir, ’ he said. I made many excuses, but in vain ; the farce was cast with all its usual strength,—Macklin himself, Lewis, and Quick ; and at it we went.”

Johnstone’s appearance in this part was really an epoch in the drama. A good, well-accomplished

Irishman was greatly wanted. Moody was superannuated, and played without life or spirit ; Egan was tame, and wanted the requisite whim and fun ; while Rock, admirable in spalpeen characters, such as the Haymaker in " Rosina," was utterly disqualified, both by person and manner, from attempting anything superior. Johnstone, therefore, flashed upon the town, the blaze of a new luminary. His perfect brogue, his exquisitely comic manner, and his agreeable voice in singing, formed an irresistible charm, which was much enhanced by his handsome person and free military address. His two ballads in " Love à-la-mode,"—" You never did hear of an Irishman's fear," and " Let other men sing of their goddesses bright,"—added to his other qualifications, excited the ambition of dramatists and song-writers. Many a part was produced with little pretension to wit or humour ; but its success was deemed certain if Johnstone talked about the crature, shilelahs, and petticoats, and sung smalilou, bubberoo, whack, or gramachree.

A tribute of this kind to his talent was paid by Mr. Cobb, who, in an opera called " The Wife of Two Husbands," where the scene is in Sicily, brings on one Sergeant Armagh, to make bulls, talk violent loyalty, and sing about love and whisky. His part concludes with the following poetical lines : Gay or Sheridan never wrote anything like them.

“ May the smiles of love
Cheer our lads so clever !
And with whisky, boys,
We 'll drink King George for ever.”

To match or to counterpoise the Irish sergeant, Bannister had the part of an English sailor, quite as loyal, and quite as strangely woven into the piece. In Sicily, be it remembered, he is engaged by a nobleman, as master of the revels, principal dancer, director of processions and leader of the choruses. The piece is avowedly taken from a French melo-drame, “ *La Femme à deux Maris*,” but Carronade was the genuine offspring of an English green-room. A French theatre, or a British man-of-war, produces no such animal. Carronade, however, differs from Armagh in one respect ; he is of some use in the plot, which, notwithstanding these excrescences, has much interest, and appeals powerfully to the feelings. Mrs. Powell rose to a high pitch of excellence in depicting the woes, the fears, the internal agonies arising from a sense of having done wrong, unaccompanied with any consciousness of guilt : that state which leaves the mind only to regret the past, and wish that it had never been. On publishing the play, the author gratefully acknowledged the indefatigable exertions of Bannister as manager, through which it “ was prepared for

representation with a degree of celerity and correctness rarely paralleled."

If the frequent expressions of loyal and national feelings in these pieces appear at this day forced and unnatural, the situation of affairs at that time should be recollected. The implacable enemy of our country had recently renewed hostilities, prefacing them with a vaunting declaration that England, single-handed, could not cope with France; a boast which every English bosom swelled to resent. He was, beside, collecting a force at Boulogne, which he called the Army of England, and with which he pretended to invade and subjugate this country: thousands and thousands of volunteers took up arms to aid the regular forces, and to punish the invader, if he really intended, and fortune had aided his temerity by enabling him to effect a landing. While the animated effusions of loyalty were heard in the senate, and repeated in all associations and unions of society,—when all publications, from the laborious volume down to the placard and street-ballad, teemed with the same sentiment,—it was not wonderful that the theatre should respond to the public voice, and move with the general impulse. The feeling was certainly right, although the expression of it was often coarse, forced, and unnatural. In their personal character, the players

were not behind the rest of the country in patriotism. The representation of this very play, "The Wife of Two Husbands," was once (29th October) postponed; and the reason assigned was, "the attendance of many of the performers on military duty in volunteer corps."

"Hearts of Oak," a comedy by Mr. Allingham (10th November), was free from all obtrusive expressions of loyalty and national feeling in itself, although they copiously abounded in the epilogue. Johnstone, as usual, had an Irish character, Mr. Brian O'Bradleigh; a gentleman without wit or humour, who is "ashamed to look himself in the face."

Bannister performed Ten-per-cent, a very stupid, hum-drum, money-getting, bargain-hunting sort of vermin; a mere earth-worm, without beauty on its surface, or elegance in its motions. The comedy was not without some interest, but, on the whole, it was justly condemned; its term of existence was five nights.

A complete and brilliant success awaited the next new production (5th December), the celebrated and memorable "Caravan; or, The Driver and his Dog," by Reynolds. The plot is no more than that of the ordinary melo-dramas acted at the great and the minor theatres:—A nobleman is imprisoned, and threatened with death. A tyrannical oppressor is

in love with his wife, and endeavours to obtain her compliance with his desires by alarming her for the safety of her child. She answers his proposals by screaming out the accustomed word "Never!" and faints; while young master is thrown from a rock into the sea. Such is the general outline; but the interest arises from the generosity and intrepidity of Blabbo, the driver of a caravan, who, in defiance of danger, sustains the life of the captive Marquis by furnishing him with nourishment during a long journey, forms plans and uses exertions for his rescue, and finally saves the life of his son, by sending his Newfoundland dog, Carlo, to drag him from the water.

Bannister played Blabbo with the happiest effect; but the success and popularity of the piece were not the fruits of the industry, skill, or talent of the actors. By a contrivance, new at Drury Lane, but often used at Sadler's Wells, a large tank of real water was placed in the stage; and from a rocky elevation, after the child had been thrown in, a real dog sprang after him and restored him to his parents. The dog belonged to the keeper of an à-la-mode beef-shop, and was not without difficulty trained to perform his part; but by some contrivances in the arrangement of the scenery, and the constant care and guidance of Bannister, he was drilled into perfect correctness. In the course of

the piece, Blabbo intimates pretty broadly that he would rather be deprived of his mistress than his dog ; and, at the conclusion, he first kisses Carlo, and then Rosa ; and so everything ends rightly.

“The Soldier’s Daughter,” a comedy by Cherry, a player at the theatre, was eminently successful (7th February 1804) ; and produced a flowing return to the treasury, being performed in the season five-and-thirty times. The strength of this play is in its agreeableness, for the plot is of a very ordinary description, and there is nothing particularly striking in the characters ; but an interesting narrative is led by natural means to a happy conclusion. There is no atrocious vice to punish ; and the clearing up of mistakes, the reconciliation of relatives, the relief of unmerited poverty, and the prosperous union of deserving lovers, constitute the whole charm of the scene. The principal characters are Frank Heartall and the Widow Cheerly, played by Bannister and Mrs. Jordan. He is a benevolent, virtuous man ; she, the daughter of an officer, a widow in the prime of her years, and full of life and spirit. Their characters are strongly and agreeably wrought out ; they fall suddenly in love with each other ; the obstacles to their union are few, and easily surmounted. Mrs. Jordan availed herself dexterously of the prevailing rage for volunteering ; and, after electrifying the house by a soldier-like giving of the word “ At-

tention," delivered a well-written epilogue, describing with much humour, the constitution of a female army of reserve.

A farce by Franklin, called "The Counterfeit," (March 17) ran ten nights; but its structure is too feeble to demand much notice. Bannister played Addle, a footman, who, taking his master's name, and producing some false credentials, finds a sharp, shrewd attorney, sufficiently silly to fill his pockets, clothe his back, and plan a marriage between the counterfeit and his own aunt. It wanted all Bannister's whim and spirit to bear up this rickety lump of dulness; but it soon was withdrawn, and as soon forgotten. In a preface, when he published his farce, Mr. Franklin, as so many other authors had done, acknowledged his obligations to Bannister.

Stimulated, perhaps, by the success of "The Soldier's Daughter," Cumberland's ever-ready Muse supplied the theatre (7th April) with "The Sailor's Daughter." It was not favoured by the public, nor did it deserve to be so. Some skill was shown in the delineation of Hartshorn, an apothecary at Bath, well played by Bannister; a husband blessed with a scolding wife, but not tamely yielding to her ill-humour; an apothecary made out of a man-of-war surgeon, firm, blunt, humane, and just,—the protector of virtuous innocences, and the exposé of every sort of duplicity and fraud; not omitting that

which prevails in his own profession. The dialogue is often pointed, and replete with just observations, well expressed ; but, on the whole, nothing can be more dull than the comedy ; and the audiences, by whom it was tolerated four nights, must have been amply endowed with patience.

For Mrs. Jordan's benefit (16th April) Bannister performed a character in a farce by Oulton, called "The Middle Dish, or the Irishman in Turkey ;" but as it was only once presented, and never published, it cannot now be told what was the name of Bannister's character, or whether the Irishman or the Turkey formed the middle dish.

A farce called " Hunt the Slipper " had been performed twenty years ago at the Haymarket ; Downton reproduced it this season for his benefit (17th May), and Bannister played Billy Bristle, a shoemaker, who talks all in the terms of his trade, and by a most absurd misunderstanding is taken by an elderly virgin for a captain and a lover. There is some drollery in the dialogue, but nothing to increase the reputation of an actor.

At the close of the season (12th June) Bannister delivered an address, in which, both as manager and performer, he acknowledged his obligations for that patronage which had made the theatre so prosperous, and had so highly contributed to his personal satis-

faction. It was known at the time, that he renounced the duties of manager. He received the thanks of the proprietors, enjoyed the warm friendship and hearty good wishes of the company, and, as I have already shown, earned from every dramatist who published a piece, an eulogy for his urbanity, activity, and judgment.

Unable, for many reasons, to carry into complete effect his scheme for establishing a summer company, independent of the two winter theatres, Colman obtained for this season the assistance of Bannister. This engagement could not be otherwise than agreeable to the performer ; the boards of the Haymarket formed the theatrical birth-place of himself and his father ; he was in habits of endearing friendship with the manager ; and there were some parts which his taste and fancy made him wish to perform, which were not so accessible, or, at least, which could not have a run elsewhere. For his benefit, at Drury Lane, he had (23rd April) appeared as Caleb Quotem, in "The Review ;" but that piece could not be repeated there ; and Jack Johnstone, the real, the only Looney Mactwolter, was not engaged at the Haymarket.

Bannister had been desirous of bringing forward "The Heir-at-Law" on this night ; but the following letter from Colman will explain the difficulties

which impeded the accomplishment of that wish, and show the feeling of true friendship which prevailed between the parties.

“MY DEAR JACK,

“It gives me no small pain to advance my obstacle to the wishes of a friend who has so often and so cheerfully promoted my own. If I send you a tedious letter, it is because I am anxious that you may not suppose I would say ‘No’ to any request of yours without reasons which I trust your own candour and understanding will allow to be cogent. I wrote to Mr. Harris some time back to desire that “The Heir-at-law” might not be acted at Covent Garden this season for the house, unless by command of his Majesty; and this letter was forwarded to the king. I have already (as I make a distinction between the performer and the theatre) promised it to Fawcett for his benefit, when the original Cicely (Mrs. Gibbs) is to play the character; who has been shamefully, I think, thrown in the back ground by Harris, and which indeed determined me that no person except herself should play the part (in London) which is so peculiarly her own. It would not only hurt her, but the summer theatre. A moment’s consideration will, I am sure, point out to you, that under all the circumstances which I have stated, the performance of the piece in question

on your night would be injurious to me, and injurious and invidious in more than *one* instance to others. Remember, I speak all this to you *in confidence*, and that nothing but the strongest motives could induce me to hesitate a moment in serving your interests. Even policy might (were I not above policy in friendships) urge me to cry "Yes" instantly; for in confidence also I inform you that I shall have a proposal in a very short time to make to you, your compliance with which will be of infinite service to me. Adieu, my dear Jack, and do not think uncharitably of yours most truly,

"G. COLMAN."

Bannister soon had an opportunity (13th June) of playing Dr. Pangloss. He also appeared, although not for the first time (25th July), in Job Thornberry. As these characters, as well as Caleb Quotem, had always been in the possession of Fawcett, it is not intended to institute any comparison; but it may suffice to say, that in them all Bannister was greeted with applauses, which, had he been capable of so unworthy a feeling, afforded him no ground for envy. Dr. Pangloss is a character perfectly *sui generis*. He does not in any particular resemble the optimist of Voltaire, from whom his name is derived, but by incessant complaisance advances his "three hundred pounds

a year" to nine; and by a turn of fortune is deprived of it all, without discovering that he lives in "the best of all possible worlds." His tame obsequiousness, his unceasing vanity and shallow pedantry, are irresistibly comic; nobody perhaps would have thought, if the author had not suggested it, that the respectable, honourable, and useful body of gentlemen who fill the important station of tutors, could feel an apprehension of disgrace from the exhibition of this personage; he affects them no more than Iago does the whole army, or Allscip the entire profession of the law. But this comedy should never be dismissed from notice without mentioning the admirably drawn, and not less admirably acted, character of Daniel Dowlas, *pro tempore* Lord Duberley. Accident makes him appear the successor to a noble title, but the inherent vulgarity of the ship-chandler, bursting out on every occasion, the vain attempts to catch at some portion of the dignity suited to his new station, the vulgar phrases, the mean thoughts, the unbecoming mixture of assumed pride and intrusive familiarity, which are continually presented, force on the mind sensations of unceasing mirth. Nor is this feeling rendered unpleasant by the perception of any vice or evil propensity in Daniel. He is free from all blame in the acquisition of his supposed wealth and honours, and they do not render him

arrogant or voluptuous ; the ridicule of his character arises only from the difficulty he feels in accommodating himself to his new situation, and we see him deposed from it, certainly without regret, but also without the least ill-will. In look, gesture, speech, and dress, Suett carried this part to the highest point of dramatic perfection.

Caleb Quotem differs widely from Pangloss ; he is a pedant in his way ; a mixture of pretended learning and useless activity ; Dicky Gossip, with additional trades and acquirements. His character is fully portrayed in the following dialogue between him and Captain Beaugard :

“ *Beau.*—May I ask who I have the honour of addressing ?

“ *Quo.*—Caleb Quotem, village factotum, painter, plumber, and apothecary.—I let lodgings, newspapers, and novels,—keep a cold bath, and cut hair, as Johnson says ; pawnbroker, pastry-cook, and patent perriwig maker ; licensed to sell lottery-tickets, law stationery, and blacking. I sell powder and periwinkles, and take in subscribers for a magazine of my own making ; perhaps you’d like to peruse a prospectus, as the poet says.

“ *Beau.*—No, no ; your magazine won’t do for me.

“ *Quo.*—Then my physic *will*, I’ll answer for it, and as Pope very justly observes, I should be happy to *conclude* you among the rest of my patients.

“ *Beau.*—Oho ! do you *conclude* a patient every now and then ?

“ *Quo.*—In the way of business, no man takes more pains to bring their cares to a finish ; I stick by ’em to the last, as Horace has it, and don’t even quit ’em when they die.

“ *Beau.*—The devil you don’t !

“ *Quo.*—No, sir, I stay to bury ’em, as Blair says.

“ *Beau.*—How kind !

“ *Quo.*—Very ! I’m a universal genius — cure the cholic, as Akenside says ; teach the children, mix up medicines, attend the sick, and bury the dead ; in other words, I’m schoolmaster, apothecary, sexton, and undertaker ; open pews and pull bells on holidays. Oh ! if you were but to hear me in a peal of hands in triple-bob-majors, you’d allow that I can ring the changes with anybody.

“ *Beau.*—I think you do ring the changes pretty well.

“ *Quo.*—Ha ! ha ! ha ! as Shakspeare says, I believe I do.—then I train gentlemen for boxing, bait bears, and walk wagers : it was but last Thursday I undertook to eat for five guineas with Sam Swallowwell, the greatest glutton in the parish, and beat him by a whole pig and an apple-pie, as Addison says.

“ *Beau.*—And do you perform all these wonderful operations in that dress ?

“ *Quo.*—By no means ;—every avocation claims a difference of habit, as Hollingshed says ; and I have a wig for every character I appear in, as Milton says ; I teach school in a bush, go to church in a tail, ring bells in a bob, dig graves in a scratch, visit my patients in a bag, and bury ’em in a night-cap.”

Among the eccentricities and whims which Colman has confessed, may be numbered a fear that, if he produced an unsuccessful farce, it might operate to the prejudice of a more important drama, and therefore “ The Review,” and several other after-pieces, were announced as the compositions of Arthur Griffinhoof, Esq. of Turnham Green. This veil was soon seen through ; but another charge was made against him, that of taking scenes and characters from other men’s pieces, and using them as

his own : this too, he acknowledged in part ; but with respect to Caleb Quotem in particular, he showed that he reserved it from the wreck of an unsuccessful production, and that the gentleman who advanced a claim to it, had, in fact, borrowed it from a farce published long before. If Colman had taken any part of Caleb literally from a piece which had been condemned, he would not have been to blame : his case was far different from that of Foote, who stole *Mother Cole* entirely from Joseph Reed's "Register Office," and then suppressed the farce which he had plundered.

In the course of the season, Bannister went through nearly the whole circle of his established comic parts, adding a few novelties, such as Hodge, in "Love in a Village ;" Sir Robert Bramble, in "The Poor Gentleman ;" and Antonio, the drunken gardener, in "The Follies of a Day ;" a deep descent from Count Almaviva.

His first original part (18th July) was *Ramble* in "Foul deeds will rue," a musical drama, by Arnold. It had nearly failed on the first night, but by persevering exertion was carried on to a fifth. Of Bannister's part, and his kindness to the author, I adopt the testimony Mr. Arnold himself has given. "I must, however," he says, after speaking of the performers in general, "particularize Mr. Bannister, jun. who, with much kindness undertook, and

with much spirit supported, a character not originally intended for him, and which from its nature was very confined and much beneath his powers."

One more original character Bannister performed, that of Pegassus Puncheon in Colman's "Gay Deceivers." It has no originality, for there is none in a tradesman or servant, who, rhyming a little, fancies himself an inspired poet; or who mixes up with his discourse on ordinary subjects, scraps inapplicable and unassorted, from his miscellaneous reading. If Puncheon had possessed more comic humour and whim than he did, the extravagant breadth of Nehemiah Flam, admirably performed by Matthews, was quite sufficient to conceal it from observation.

For the last time, Bannister displayed his filial duty, by acting (16th October) Sir David Dunder for his father's benefit. As the veteran was perceptibly decaying, and laboured, at the time, under an indisposition which prevented him from appearing on the stage, the managers of both theatres permitted the gratuitous assistance of several principal performers, which they generously consented to afford. In "Ways and Means," "Honest Thieves," and "The Rival Soldiers," he had, therefore, beside his son, the attraction of Munden, Johnstone, Bartley, Simmons, Mrs. Gibbs, and Mrs. Davenport.

This night was productive of a little comic ad-

venture, which I relate in the words of Mr. Bartley: "I acted," he says, "in one of the pieces, 'The Honest Thieves.' Jack Johnstone was Teague, and Munden, Obadiah. On extra nights like these matters are never very regular; the usual servants are not in their places, properties are mislaid, and the performers proceed as they can. An unpleasant instance occurred. Teague pours wine from a bottle into Obadiah's mouth, to expedite his intoxication. The wine-bottle was not to be found; the property-man's closet was ransacked, and, at the last moment, a bottle was produced; Johnstone seized it, and when the time came for applying it, Munden opened his mouth as usual, and received, instead of wine, a quantity of lamp-oil. Poor Munden screamed with disgust; in his rage knocked Johnstone's hat off, and rushed from the stage in a state not to be described. Remedies were applied, and after a short delay, the farce proceeded; but the enraged comedian swore it should be the last time he would appear for old Charley's benefit."

If Munden thought this oath made in too much haste and heat to be seriously binding, he never had an opportunity of revoking it; for in ten days (26th October) Charles Bannister ceased to live; but he enjoyed to the last the happy recollection of his son's unremitting affection and undeviating kindness. Filial duty was never more strikingly or beautifully exem-

plified than in the person of Bannister. He crowned the acts of a pious and generous life by declaring, that when his time should come, his remains should be deposited in the vault of St. Martin's church, close to those of his father.

In Charles Bannister, such as he was at the time of his decease, the stage sustained no loss ; for his powers had long been declining, and were at last annihilated. What he had been, presents a more glorious display. Caliban has been mentioned, and with Charles Bannister, Shakspeare's monster died. Steady, in "The Quaker," has never, except in him, found an adequate representative. Several of his songs have never, since his time, been nearly so well executed. Among them may be named "Her mouth which a smile," in "Rosina ;" "While happy in my native land," in "The Election ;" "Brave Admiral Benbow ;" "To Anacreon in Heaven ;" "When Bibbo went down to the regions below ;" and above all, and never to be equalled or forgotten, "Stand to your guns, my Hearts of Oak." In this song, his diminuendo while giving the command, "Reserve your fire,"—and "not yet, nor yet," followed by the tremendous burst of his powerful voice, in the word "Fire !" produced an electrifying and appalling effect.

From the anecdotes which are scattered about in newspapers, magazines, and jest books, it would

be easy to make a very copious collection of bon-mots, but I shall repeat only two; the first I heard, and the other is derived from indisputable authority; both, perhaps, may be public, but I do not know it.

One night when he had been playing the patriotic Baker in "The Election," an acquaintance at the tavern, who had been in the stage-box, said, "Charles, it is impossible you should be a gentleman, you play the baker so naturally." "How could I miss playing the baker well," Charles answered, "when I had such a *cake* before me?"

While he was under examination as a witness in the Court of King's Bench, the Lord Chief Justice retiring, caused a temporary suspension of the proceedings. One of the learned counsel, by way of pleasantry, asked Charles for a song. "With all my heart," he answered, "if I can have an accompaniment." The barrister replied, that he had no music there. "I wonder at that," said Charles, "for you seem to have the band under your nose."

CHAPTER XXIV.

1804.—1805.—1806.

Changes at both Theatres.—Master Betty,—his reception.—Bannister plays Dexter, in *The Land we live in*.—*The Honey Moon*, by Tobin,—its great merit and success.—Elliston and Miss Duncan.—Bannister in *Rolando*.—Holcroft's *Lady of the Rock*.—Bannister in *The Fisherman*,—*The Soldier's Return*,—*Racket*,—Lord Henry in *Personation*.—Letter of Mr. Elliston.—Bannister at Manchester,—Liverpool.—Letter to Mr. Swendall.—Belfast.—Richmond.—Drury Lane.—Changes, and new engagements.—Braham and Storace appear in *The Cabinet*.—Bannister in *Whimsiculo*.—*The Weathercock*.—Bannister in *Tristram Fickle*.—*The Travellers*, by Cherry.—*Broken Gold*, by Charles Dibdin.—*The Forty Thieves*—Bannister, in *Ali Baba*.—*The Gamesters*, a comedy revived.—*The Invisible Girl*.—Bannister Captain Allclack and everything else.—Death of King.—Letter from him to Bannister.—Benefit to his Widow.

PREPARATIONS at both theatres for the ensuing season portended an active contest for public favour. The two Kembles and Mrs. Siddons were now, with some other performers of great reputation, added to the Covent Garden company; while at Drury Lane, where Wroughton presided as manager, Elliston, Mr. and Mrs. Mathews, Mr. and Mrs. H.

Johnstone, and Charles Taylor, a good singer and actor, were introduced as a reinforcement.

But the great attraction, and it was shared between the houses, was a boy ; to call him a young man, or even a youth, would be "a name too high,"—Master Henry West Betty. He was only thirteen years of age, but had already performed in Ireland, Scotland, and at some of the provincial theatres, first parts in tragedy. The reputation he had acquired reached London, and liberal, or rather magnificent offers, were made to him by both houses, until at length they divided him between them. He was received with unparalleled favour ; the throng at the doors was enormous, and, to all but the youthful and vigorous, alarming : the applauses bestowed on him were unbounded, and the interest taken in him, by the public and by individuals, assumed a guise resembling that of loyalty to a sovereign, or affection to a relative. When he presented himself, mute attention gave way only to rapturous applauses ; his goings out and returnings home were watched by many, eager to obtain a glimpse of the prodigy ; and when he was indisposed, a bulletin, affixed to some accessible part of his dwelling, satisfied the curiosity of strangers, and consoled and cheered his anxious friends. During one whole season this passionate admiration suffered no diminution ; before the end of a second it had

almost entirely subsided. It were now a waste of criticism to analyze the merits, or particularize the faults, of this juvenile performer. He must have possessed considerable powers, or the ever active genius of ridicule would have sunk him into immediate contempt; but a proof that he was not gifted with that high quality of mind, on which alone greatness can be founded, is, that he never improved. Criticism did not spare, but it did not injure him; he faded like a premature blossom, which may be recollected, but cannot be retained. The wisdom of his true friends prevailed so far as to accumulate and realize the large profits he acquired, to form a fund for his future maintenance; but when he tried his strength at the University, he made no creditable progress; and when, at a mature time of life, he appeared on the stage, it was observed with astonishment, that the elegance and grace which distinguished his boyhood, had entirely deserted him, and that he had neither ear nor voice sufficient to make blank verse sound harmoniously. The vanity of his friends conferred on him the dangerous and injudicious sobriquet of "The Young Roscius," and the hasty voice of fashion re-echoed the absurdity; but time speedily removed the delusion, and the title is now only recollected as an injudicious assumption, but nowhere recognized as a just attribute.

In the success or failure of this extraordinary performer Bannister had no share, as he never acted in the same pieces with him. Betty assumed some characters which Bannister had played in his early life, particularly Achmet, Douglas, and Tancred ; but the tragic Muse had ceased to captivate her former votary.

Bannister, no longer, since his father's death, called junior in the play-bills, appeared first in an original character (29th December) as Dexter, in "The Land we live in." The piece was remorselessly damned on its first representation: the author ascribes his hard fate to the neglect he had shown of plot and incident, while bestowing too much attention on the dialogue. By publishing the play he has proved both propositions ; the dialogue is chaste, playful, and sparkling ; the plot and incidents amount to nearly nothing. Dexter was an audacious, versatile, intrepid, knavish footman ; but he was in no respect a novelty on the stage.

Far different was the fate, far different the merits, of "The Honey-Moon," a comedy by Mr. Tobin (31st January 1805). The author, evidently gifted with a fervid poetical mind, combined in this piece, great beauty of language, an interesting plot and a denouement, striking without extravagance. Critics, who too often expatiate on faults without allowing for beauties, alleged that "The Honey-Moon" was

little more than a *pasticcio*, formed from fragments of Shakspeare, Beaumont, and other writers of their times; but such an observation is extremely unjust to the author. It is not to be denied that many resemblances may be found; but they do not proceed from the penury of mind which leads to literary theft—they are occasioned by an ardent love of those models, whom, to imitate, ought to be the highest glory of the dramatist. Mr. Tobin, strongly imbued with the love of these ancient masters, has imitated the flowing freedom of their plots, and in the delineation of his well-conceived characters, has often caught the full glow of their poetic fire.

All the parts were most ably filled. Mr. Elliston and Miss Duncan never appeared to such great advantage, as in the Duke of Aranzo and Juliana. The lady has the impetuosity of Katherine the shrew, without her coarseness and ill-manners; and in some of her conduct, and in her reformation, resembles Margarita, in “Rule a Wife;” but she is utterly free from her vices, and disgraceful motives and intentions in marrying. She is, in fact, a graceful votary of vanity, whom the correction of this foible leaves without an imputation, and who can never be suspected of a relapse. The Duke, unaffected with the sordid desire of wealth, which disgraces both Petruchio and Leon, seeks only to reform, in one particular, a deserving beauty to

whom he is sincerely attached, and after detailing his course of intended proceeding, states the sum of his hopes.

“When with a bold hand I have weeded out
The rank growth of her pride, she'll be a garden
Lovely in blossom, rich in fruit ; till then
An unprun'd wilderness.”

The scenes which occur in the execution of this design, are poetic, animated, and often eminently comical.

Rolando, the character supported by Bannister, was a woman-hater, a humorist of the highest description ; and it afforded ample scope to his powers. His renunciation of his heresies, when subdued by a lovely and affectionate woman, was frank, bold, and cheering ; not in anything, except the mere matter of fact, resembling that of Benedick, to which it was injudiciously compared.

Mr. Tobin was a native of Nevis, where his family enjoyed affluence and honours. Application to business and to literature in England had undermined his health ; a warm climate was recommended, and he had commenced his voyage homeward. At this period, his play was produced ; but, far from enjoying a triumph in its continued attraction during the whole season, he did not live to receive the intelligence of its first successful reception.

Holcroft, the indefatigable veteran, produced

(12th February) “The Lady of the Rock,” a melodrame, which was neither damned, nor conspicuously successful. By the aid of Mr. Johnson, the machinist, who contrived a most astonishing storm scene, it lived nine nights.

Bannister played the fisherman, the real hero; for he united bravery, sincerity, loyalty, and benevolence. The piece was inanimate, in most of its events trite, and too silly for long life. Johnson’s machinery and Bannister’s acting could not preserve it.

In “The Soldier’s Return,” Bannister played Rocket, a man of fashion—a coxcomb of the coarsest mould, a pedant of the humblest description; he had two humours, that of dressing so that no man suspected him to be a gentleman, and of introducing the names of men of celebrity, such as Dryden, Newton, and Shakspeare, for the purpose of displaying his memory, by reciting the dates of their birth and death, and their principal productions, in the manner of a compendium of certain articles in an abridged biographical dictionary. From the 23rd of April, when it first appeared, it was dragged before the public twelve times: it was published without the author’s name on the title-page; but we are told that the music was composed and selected by Mr. Hook.

It should not be omitted, that for his benefit (29th

April) he played Lord Henry, in "Personation," a piece in one act, derived from the French, *Défiance et malice*, by Michel Dieulafoy. It consists, Mr. Holcroft informs us, in his "Theatrical Recorder," but of two characters, which were performed by Mr. Bannister and Miss De Camp; the intrigue arises from the young lady sometimes disguising herself and assuming the character of her *gouvernante*, and her lover pretending and appearing to be his own steward, while they alternately assume their natural characters.

The translation was by T. Dibdin, who also furnished a prologue, in which the old joke of making every line end in *ation*, was now more threadbare than it had been before.

To diversify a little the recitation of mere theatrical events, and to show the cordial manner in which Bannister was regarded by his associates and friends, I insert a letter from Elliston, unimportant in itself, but composed in a style of pretended pomposity and real good humour, which is creditable to the writer.

"May 11th, 1805.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Do tell your friend that theatrical study has come in so fast upon me this last week, I have not a moment to call my own;—this is the whole truth

and nothing but the truth—so help me—Jack! My Sunday jaunt is therefore at an end (I mean to-morrow's proposed pleasure). Say everything handsome, well-bred, civil, polite, and engaging for me; and when I see my inviter I will explain farther. The loss is mine; for to no one else can there be a loss, unless chairs are placed for a certain number, and my rush-bottom, cane, or horse-hair seat is unoccupied. Cyphers are of consequence when accounts are regularly kept.

“Much pleasure be thine,

“R. W. ELLISTON.”

Bannister took no engagement this year at the Haymarket, but made an extensive country tour, accompanied by Mrs. Bannister. He went first to Manchester, where he joined his sister, Mrs. Swendale, and her husband, who were regularly engaged as performers, and whose friendly offices contributed greatly to his comfort. Before Bannister's arrival, the manager had incurred no slight degree of public displeasure from a supposed penury, in not retaining some of the best London performers; but on the arrival of Bannister and Miss De Camp, all ill-humour subsided; they were cordially greeted, the house filled every night, and they had overflowing benefits.

From Manchester, he proceeded to Liverpool, in

pursuance of an engagement previously formed. The following letter to his brother will explain his arrangements and reception, and is, in every respect, characteristic of the writer. The warmth of his domestic affections, the goodness of his heart, his upright attention to business, mixed with a little levity and forgetfulness, show him in the light of those personages which he most accurately depicted on the mimic scene.

“ Liverpool, Tuesday, July 2nd, 1805.

“ DEAR SWENDALL,

“ We got here safe and pleasantly on Saturday evening. Everything was smooth and right with the mighty managers! Knight said he was rather surprised at my letter to Lewis, as they certainly never meant me to exceed the proposed time; but I am satisfied I did right in mentioning the circumstance. The theatre is considerably improved by the late alteration; and is, indeed, in point of size and ornament, just what a theatre should be. Last night the new comedy was performed to 120/.; this, though not a bad house, is certainly not a very good one,—the command therefore is no great catch. Mrs. B. is much pleased with Liverpool. We dined on Sunday at the Dock House; and I have since paid the unfortunate woman every attention by showing her everything she could possibly see in so short a

time. We are comfortably lodged at Mr. Smith's, within two doors of the theatre, where I beg you will address a letter by return of post. I left my cocked hat at Mrs. Ward's, and shall be distressed unless I get it on Thursday: it was left on a chair next the door in our sitting-room, and enclosed in a pasteboard case, which the gentle tailor, who dressed me, made for the purpose of travelling. I am thus particular in describing the hat, as the house is rather *particular*. Be kind enough, likewise, to inquire at Getty's, where we had the first chaise, if a small book, called "Dr. Johnson in Miniature," was left in the front pocket; if so, send it with the hat. I am now going to a ten-o'clock rehearsal, so must conclude. We received from the united correspondents in Gower Street a letter yesterday: there, health, innocence, and good spirits unite to make all parties happy. Mrs. B. and self unite in best wishes to you and Jane, and believe me truly and sincerely,

"Yours,

"J. BANNISTER.

"Remember me kindly to my best of friends, Mr. James, not forgetting his good lady."

He next went to Belfast, where he was as well received and as successful as usual, and finished his excursions by playing, for a limited number of

nights, at Richmond ; and, although so near the metropolis, his attraction never failed ; and he enjoyed the additional satisfaction of showing his continued gratitude to Dibdin, by performing for the benefit of his wife.

Still under the management of Mr. Wroughton, Drury Lane was opened (14th September 1805) for the season. To counterbalance, in some degree, the great strength united at the rival theatre, and to compensate the defalcations which death and change had occasioned, the proprietors added to their company, Mr. and Mrs. H. Siddons, Mademoiselle Parisot, Braham, and Storace ; and Stephen Kemble added his weight in Falstaff for three nights. Master Betty was divided, as before. H. Johnstone and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Byrne, had accepted engagements at Covent Garden ; Pope and Mrs. Harlowe had retired ; and poor Suett, leaving many regrets behind him, was, after all his fun, become, as Mercutio calls it, “ a grave man.”

Braham and Storace made their first appearance (12th November) in “ The Cabinet,” an opera to which, three years before, they had given stability and fame at Covent Garden. Bannister had the part of Whimsiculo, which originally belonged to Fawcett : it possesses neither wit, humour, nor action, to engage interest or afford gratification ; but when Bannister was to talk, sing, and romp

with Storace, pleasure was sure to be felt, and applause to follow.

“The Weathercock,” by Mr. Allingham, (18th November,) afforded good scope to Bannister’s exertions in Tristram Fickle. This character, most happily conceived for a farce, is that of a young man of good parts and address, who, unfixed as to any particular view in life, yields to an ardent imagination, and adopts, with eager devotion, the most recent impression, obliterating all others as if they had never existed. Thus, in the course of a day, he has renounced music, become a practising barrister, a tragic actor, a physician, a general, a botanist, a quaker, and a beau. He is the lover of the same lady under the different forms of a Savoyarde, a quaker, and a gentlewoman, ever renouncing and retracting, in favour of the present appearance, all previous professions and declarations. The versatility of Tristram was supported in all its changes by characteristic and spirited dialogue, and it was ably assisted by Miss De Camp, who, in Variella, sustained her disguises with equal judgment and spirit, and by Mathews, who showed great humour in Briefwit, a dry old lawyer, the guardian of the young lady, whose sentences exceed a monosyllable only when they are composed of a law axiom, a short opinion, or a truism. Maugre some ill-natured effusions of the critics, the farce had ample

and merited success ; it was performed thirty times, and often afterward revived, to display aspiring actors in the hero.

Mr. Cherry, the successful author of “ *The Soldier’s Daughter*,” brought forth (22nd January 1806) a curious miscellany in five acts, “ *The Travellers ; or, Music’s Fascination*.” It proceeded from a suggestion of Corri, the composer, who wished to have an opera written, wherein the national melody of various kingdoms might effectually be introduced, and the progress of music traced, commencing in China, and terminating in England. In his prologue, he traces the outline of his design.

“ When Music, heavenly maid, was young
In China first—suppose—her lyre was strung ;
In China, then, our drama we commence,
And trace the origin of sound from thence.
To Turkey, next, our vagrant Muse takes flight,
Where the soft science yields improved delight.
Still wand’ring forth the tune-struck Muse is found
Chasing the goddess on her classic ground
To fair Italia, where the sorceress dwells
By science gifted with harmonic spells.
For England, next, where art and science meet,
She sails, the nymph Terpsichore to greet.

Such a plan of drama would hardly admit the supposition of a consistent plot or narrative ; if any expected it, they must have been their own deceivers. We have a Chinese Prince, travelling, attended by a female lover in the disguise of a page,

with an Irish follower in his train, who, ignorant of every language except that of Tipperary, professes to be an interpreter. Such a puerile absurdity required all the talent and popularity of Jack Johnstone to be endured. The scenery was exquisite. In the last act, by a contrivance of Mr. Graham, the magistrate, the whole stage represented the quarter-deck of a man-of-war, with adjacent shipping. Into this scene Bannister was lugged, to sustain a part of no importance, graced with a few phrases of such sea-slang as is generally written by land-lubbers, but was never heard on the quarter-deck, or even on the forecastle. Good scenery and very pretty music, well performed, produced their full effect. The piece was played nearly thirty times.

Poor old Charles Dibdin was not so fortunate. He attempted (8th February) a farce, called "Broken Gold," and Bannister assisted his effort, by playing a character named Trawl; but what it was about, I know not, as the farce was damned on the first night, and never published.

From those tales which delighted our early, and afford pleasure to our more mature days, "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments," the story of "The Forty Thieves" was selected as the subject of a romantic drama, in two acts. In the title page of a diminutive edition, published by Duncombe, it is

said to have been written by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Colman ; but this is an exaggerated, and, in part, an unfounded assertion. The history seems to be this : Mr. Ward, who had married Mrs. Sheridan's sister, selected the subject, and scenes and machinery were prepared, but when his production was inspected, it was discovered to be utterly unserviceable. The expense which had been incurred prevented the piece from being utterly rejected. Kelly was applied to ; he ran to the Temple, perhaps to get the forty thieves dealt with at the Crown office, but failing there, he persuaded Colman to give his aid, and thus, with Ward's plan, Sheridan's contrivance of some of the scenery, Kelly's music, and Colman's contribution, *Ali Baba* was produced (8th April) with perfect success, and enjoyed permanent favour. Bannister and Miss De Camp, in *Ali Baba* the poor wood-cutter, and *Morgiana* the intelligent and spirited female slave, captivated the town ; and Mathews, although his part, that of the cobbler, who has stitched together the dead body of Cassim, was slight, gained much applause in the performance.

For his benefit (28th April) Bannister revived "*The Gamesters*," a comedy, altered by Garrick from *Shirley*, in which he played Wilding. This comedy had lain dormant for twenty years, and, if it had continued in repose, there would have been

little cause of regret. The dialogue is not void of wit and pleasantry ; but the plot is coarse, forced, and, in many respects, offensive. He also performed Dicky Gossip ; but the novelty of the evening was a dramatic sketch, by Hook, “ The Invisible Girl.” The whole of this piece was executed by Bannister. He played Captain Allclack, a gentleman infected with such an overpowering *cacœthes loquendi*, that, talk to whom he will, he repels all their attempts to partake in the discourse, anticipates their thoughts, answers himself in their supposed words, and expresses resentment if he only surmises that they intend to utter a syllable. Sir Christopher Chatter, the father of his mistress, is on the stage during almost the whole scene ; but although the Captain personates a Jew, a Peer, and an old woman, he never permits Sir Christopher to exceed the stint of orator Mum, or his prototype, the demi-semiquavering friar of Rabelais, by uttering more than a single syllable at a time. The name was derived from an exhibition (if it is not a bull to say so) of an invisible girl, who answered questions, and on whom Mr. Moore bestowed a copy of verses. The girl had nothing to do with the piece ; but, that she might not, like Glycerium, in Terence’s “ Andrian,” be merely talked about, Mrs. Bland, unseen, was talked to by her lover, and sang two songs behind

the scenes. The piece was well received, and the critics having asserted that it was a translation from the French, Mr. Hook published it, challenging them to produce the original. The idea, he admitted, had been suggested to him by a description, in a morning paper, of a piece by M. Charles Maurice, called "Le Babillard;" but, except in the persevering loquacity of the chief, or rather, only character, there is no resemblance between the two.

In the course of the season (11th December 1805) the veteran King, at the call of that inexorable creditor whose claim no man can resist, paid that debt which all, in turn, must pay. For some years, in the latter part of his life, he had enjoyed the comforts and pleasures which, under prudent regulation, a competent income can bestow. In one unhappy night, he yielded to a propensity, which, in earlier life, he had solemnly renounced; he gamed, and was stripped, not without suspicion of unfair practice, of all that should have secured comfort to his declining years. Yet his sense of justice, and spirit of a gentleman, never forsook him. The following letter will show that he knew how to ask a favour without descending to meanness; and, it is proper to add, that the favour was readily granted, and the promise faithfully redeemed.

“Always take Time by the forelock.”

“Prevention is better than cure.”

MY DEAR BANNISTER,

“The two aphorisms above quoted have long had the approbation of the prudent part of the world. Before I conclude my dull epistle you will find how they are meant to be applied to the present case. I am not *perfectly* at ease, and should I let you go away for the summer without letting you know how I am circumstanced, I might, perhaps, have cause to repent, when too late, my having declined to trouble you. To the point, then : I *do not*, though I think I shortly shall, need the loan of an hundred pounds. I am almost out of cash ; and, as I make it a rule to be very correct with the tradespeople I deal with, I should be shocked almost to death should any one apply to me for payment when I shall be run aground. In all probability, I shall not be asked for a single guinea, but I shall live in constant apprehension. You have, my good fellow, been my constant and never-failing resource for some years past, whenever inconvenience has assailed me. I was confident, you never at any time ran any risk in obliging me, or I would not have applied to you. I trust, I never gave you cause to repent any of your acts of kindness to me, and you may rest assured, no such cause shall ever arise. I

shall now account to you how it is that cash runs *taper* with me.

“The benefit, which I had just before the close of last season, left in my hands considerable unappropriated monies: my intimates all knew this, and a *very particular friend* desired I would be kind enough to discount for him a foreign bill, amounting to nearly two hundred pounds, which I did without hesitation, as I found, on turning affairs in mind, I should have enough left to answer all my domestic purposes. But when the bill was presented it was not paid, which was occasioned by some slight informalities in the course of negotiation. The said bill was noted, and sent to the parties whence it originally issued. On the most rigid inquiry, I find it will ultimately be as good as one of the Bank of England. It will, every shilling of it, be paid with the costs attending it, though perhaps not with the expedition my affairs may require. I do not devote this bill, nor any part of it, to the discharge of what I now solicit from you; that, with the interest, (which I must insist on paying,) shall be forthcoming to you at Christmas next. Observe! when I say Christmas, I mean the time when the dividends of that time shall be paid at the Bank. Don't imagine I mean to pass myself on you as a *large holder of stock*: I am not so, but the party from

whom I derive a considerable portion of my present income, *is* so. As to what I shall receive on the midsummer dividend, great part of it is already devoted. After all this *round about*, I will shorten and simplify the matter. I wish to borrow (from you, in preference to any other friend) one hundred pounds, which I mean to retain till Christmas, when it shall be punctually repaid. Though I know you are too liberal to stand with rigidity concerning security, I must say that you shall not only have my bond for the sum, but a warrant to enter up judgment on that bond. I shall add, that my present property, consisting of household goods, plate, books, and respectable bonds due to me, is wholly unincumbered; therefore, should I die before you shall have received your money, you cannot meet with a moment's hesitation as to the recovery of it.

I flattered myself I should, ere this, have had half an hour's chat with you, which would have prevented the d—d formality of this scrawl.

“Yours, my dear Jack,

“With every good wish to

“Your most amiable family,

“THOMAS KING.”

Sunday, June 12, 1803.

King's widow was complimented by a performance for her benefit at Drury Lane (12th February

1806), which is said to have produced six hundred pounds. Bannister had not the satisfaction of appearing on the occasion. The piece selected was "The School for Friends," a comedy, by Miss Chambers, in the cast of which Bannister was not included, and a musical piece from the pen of Cherry, called "Thalia's Tear."

CHAPTER XXV.

1806—1807—1808.—1809.

Bannister's summer excursion.—Letter to Mr. Swendall.—Plays at Liverpool,—Dublin.—Afflicted with the gout.—Letters from Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Burnbury.—Hurts his hand in shooting.—Letter of Lady Holland.—His reception at Drury Lane—Plays Tom Surfeit, in False Alarms; the drunken admiral in the Assignment.—The Curfew, by Mr. Tobin—Bannister in Robert—Story of Mr. Sheridan preventing the run of this play, unfounded.—Day in London—Bannister in Jack Melange.—Plays Jack Junk in The Birth-day.—Unengaged during the summer.—Drury Lane, 1807—8.—Joint stage-manager with Mr. Wroughton.—Plays Storm, in Ella Rosenburgh,—Almorán or Marvellozo, in Kais,—Echo, in The World.—Barrymore quits Drury Lane.—Storace's farewell.—Kelly quits the stage.—Miss Pope also retires,—her character and progress.—Drury Lane 1808—9.—Thomas Sheridan at the head of the board of management.—Bannister plays Joe in the Fortuneteller,—Ben Blunt in the Circassian Bride.—The theatre destroyed by fire.—Covent Garden previously burnt.—Circumstances attending the burning of Drury Lane.—Compliment of the House of Commons to Mr. Sheridan.—Bannister's loss.—Letter of Mr. Rundall.—Performances at the Opera House for relief of performers.—The company play at the Lyceum.—Bannister acts Crape in Grieving's a Folly,—a part in Temper, or the Domestic Tyrant,—Ollapod in the Poor Gentleman, and a character in Sharp-set, or the Village Hotel.

In the summer, as usual, when not engaged at the Haymarket, Bannister made an excursion into

the country. His setting out, views, and little wants are described, and a provision for them characteristically requested, in a letter to his brother-in-law.

“ Tuesday, June 10th, 1806.

“ DEAR SWENDALL,

“ I shall quit London this day for my summer frisks. I have directed my portmanteau to you, by a coach called the *Telegraph*, which will arrive at the Royal Oak, Manchester, to-morrow, at six or eight in the evening ; they will come carriage paid. I shall stop at Buxton, jump into the water, and look at the Devil's Arse.—On the following Sunday, I hope to see you and my sister. Pray provide me a comfortable lodging, as near the theatre as possible ; and let it (if such a thing is to be met with) be rather airy. I leave my family at home. Agree with the woman for a fortnight certain (I detest bugs and fleas). I shall expect the person at whose house I am to lodge, to provide me a nice breakfast every morning (my appetite increases), and we will pay accordingly. As soon as you receive this, pray favour me with a line addressed to the Post Office, Buxton. Betsy and her husband sailed with a favourable wind from Gravesend, on Tuesday, at three in the morning, and it has been blowing kindly ever since ; so that her passage to Russia, it is supposed,

will be a quick one. My eye-pumps were rather strained when I left her at Gravesend, last Monday. He is a pleasing, handsome young man, in a capital way of business, and they have every prospect of happiness. Till I see you at Manchester, believe me, with love to Jane,

“ Yours truly,

“ J. BANNISTER.

“ Pray have a washerwoman ready against I arrive, one ready for short notices. If she lives next door, still more convenient.”

Betsy is his eldest daughter Elizabeth, who was married to Stephen Morgan, Esq. a Russian merchant.

I find by memorandums that, beside Manchester, he performed this summer at Liverpool and Dublin ; but I cannot discover the particulars of his progress.

In the early part of the late season, Bannister had received a serious admonition that he was, like other men, subject to those infirmities which neither his talents, nor his spirits, his public reputation, nor the affection of his friends, could avert ; he laboured under an attack of the gout, which yielded only to persevering medical application. From among the letters which greeted his recovery, I select two ; one from a female performer, well able to judge of his value and importance on the stage ; the other,

from a gentleman whose station in society and reputation in the arts, conferred a high value on his approbation.

“DEAR SIR,

“I have been prevented by constant employment from answering your obliging notes. I am sincerely sorry for your confinement, but trust it will soon end. We never know how to value a friend or great talents sufficiently, till we are deprived of them : we have been long enough without *you*, to make us subscribe most heartily to this old saying.

“The three tragedies you sent me I have read this day ; and notwithstanding there’s much pretty writing in the part you mention, I do not think I could do myself or the author any service by undertaking it. I think Mrs. Siddons would do great justice to it : I find laughing agree with me better than crying. Do come out soon, and re-establish my health,—I mean my *theatrical* health, which, without you, is certainly on the decline. My best compliments to Mrs. Bannister and your fair daughters.

“Yours very sincerely,

“D. JORDAN.”

February 26th.

“ Keswick, March 6th.

“ I am glad to find you are on this side Styx again, and hope the waters of Lethe have done you good, although your friends were sorry to find you were drinking them. It will be a great satisfaction to me to know that you parted *well* with the Chalkstone family, and that you are in no danger of being troubled with any of them again. I will make no mention of Mercury, but I hope you left my old brother boatman, Charon, hearty and well. If you now should have got over the influence of the above waters, pray recollect that you have a friend here at Keswick, whom you, of course, forgot whilst you were in the Elysian fields.

“ I have been painting in oils (O ! ye gods, at what a rate,) since October last ; and being a very young hand at it, without any knowledge of the art whatever, I am rather surprised at having painted a picture or two which I really think tolerably good, considering, too, that a twelvemonth past I could not make out a figure in oils for the soul of me.

* * * * *

“ My best compliments to Mrs. Bannister and all your family. Believe me to be,

“ Ever most sincerely yours,

“ HENRY WM. BUNBURY.”

In the autumn, he unfortunately accepted from

Cherry an invitation to a shooting party. A gun was offered him, which had been the property of Tom King, and had been left loaded a long time. Bannister was eager to use it, declaring he had never fired before. The piece burst, and dangerously wounded his left hand. Three surgeons of the first eminence attended him. One was of opinion that the whole hand must be amputated; but the reluctance of the patient, supported by the confidence of another practitioner, averted this catastrophe; and after many weeks of anxiety and suffering, he lost only two joints from two of his fingers, and one from a third.

This misfortune was cheered, and the sense of it alleviated, by many kind letters from friends and admirers. I select one, from a distinguished lady, whose name has already been mentioned.

“Holland House, Friday.

“DEAR SIR,

“I have read with great concern a paragraph in the newspapers, which mentions your having met with an accident: I hope it is unfounded, but, at least, that it is greatly exaggerated. In either case I beg you will give Lord Holland and myself the satisfaction of hearing the truth. I am, with every kind wish, your obliged humble servant,

“E. VASSALL HOLLAND.”

His appearance at Drury Lane, was delayed until the 2nd of December 1806, when he played Sir Bashful Constant. If before this he could have doubted his estimation with the public, the flattering acclamations which hailed his return, in evident health and good spirits, must have dissipated every apprehension. Wroughton, who should have played Mr. Lovemore, was prevented by indisposition from performing, and Bartley was his substitute. Sir Bashful's first appearance is in a morning visit to Lovemore. On the announcement of his name by a servant, the house rang with applause, and it continued for some time after he came on the stage. Bartley, with his accustomed good nature and discretion, complied with the feeling of the public, by departing a little from the text of the author. Advancing to him, and taking him by the hand, "Sir Bashful," he said, as soon as the tumult of joy would permit him to be heard, "I rejoice to see you here again." The audience caught at the words; the plaudits were reiterated with such fervour as completely to overcome the object of the public gratulation; the tears rolled down his cheeks, while he stood bowing, and bowing, and his first scene was half over before he could recover self-possession, or command his voice.

His first original character, this season, was Tom Surfeit, (12th January 1807,) in "False

Alarms ; or, My Cousin," an opera, by Kenny, which had remarkably good success. Surfeit was a young man who, having dissipated a small patrimony, had taken chambers in the Temple, pretended to study the law, and was wandering about the country, in search of adventures and a wealthy wife. He has neither whim, wit, nor spirit ; but the piece was fostered into life by the singing of Braham, Mrs. Mountain, Mrs. Bland, and Storace, and the animation thrown into the still-born characters by Bannister, Johnstone, Mathews, and Miss Duncan. Omitting some childish intrigues, and thread-bare situations, the plot consisted in the reclaiming of a dissolute husband, a beau garçon of fifty, by alarming his jealousy : this was effected through the personation of a hussar officer, by a young lady, a part in which Miss Duncan greatly distinguished herself. "Said a smile to a tear," a song, composed and sung to his own accompaniment on the piano-forte, by Braham, was eminently, but not, as to the music, undeservedly, successful and popular.

Miss Lee, one night, and one only, (28th January,) succeeded in alluring an audience to a comedy, called "The Assignation." Bannister appeared as a drunken admiral ; but, as the comedy never appeared again, its merits, or the causes of its failure, are not to be known.

From the posthumous stores of Tobin was

drawn a play, called "The Curfew" (19th February). The great merit and success of "The Honey-moon" raised lofty expectations of "The Curfew," which were neither totally disappointed, nor, to their full extent, realized. This play had not, like "The Honeymoon," a plot, in which human life, as it now exists, is portrayed, or in which sympathetic feelings can be excited: its era is the reign of William the Conqueror; the incidents are too wild and romantic to find an application to present contingencies, and the characters are not such as, by any conjuration of the fancy, can be assimilated to those which are encountered in real life. The great enchanter, who could force us to take a lively interest in those times, and who could excite all our feelings by portraying the profligate usurper, the disguised king, the tyrannical barons, the wandering knight, the infidel templar, the oppressed Israelite, the gay freebooter, the roystering friar, and the discontented villein, had not yet exercised his magic wand. But if the author was not endued with the unparalleled gifts of Sir Walter Scott, there was in his play much which denoted a powerful mind, and would, if he had lived to improve by criticism, have led probably to the highest excellence. In "The Curfew," the plot is wild and improbable, the events are not naturally or skilfully produced, and the catastrophe is rather

agreeable than reasonable. From internal evidence, it would be conjectured that this piece was written before "The Honey-moon," and, if so, the great improvement which Mr. Tobin had already made would lead to a prospect of most glorious results, had he been spared for their accomplishment. In the passages where Bertrand describes his rescue of the baron, the progress of his love toward his daughter, and speaks his manly disdain of the pride which, unmindful of his services, and forgetful of former encouragement, repels him only because he is not of noble descent; and in that where Matilda treats with deserved scorn the supposition that she is a witch indued with supernatural powers, and yet subject to captivity and insult at the hands of the base and ignorant; in these, and some other instances, the genius of the author blazes forth, warm and bright. In some, he descends to puerility, almost to absurdity,—for example, on an executed malefactor—

"Every blast to memorize his shame
May whistle shrilly through his hollow bones,
And, in his tongueless jaws, a voice renew,
To preach with more than mortal eloquence."

Robert, the character assigned to Bannister, is rather above mediocrity: in his hands it received all the aid that could be useful, but, in some scenes, it reminded us too strongly of others in which we had seen him to greater advantage, particularly in

that, where, like Walter, in "The Children in the Wood," he fights a determined murderer to prevent a crime which he had promised to assist in perpetrating.

This piece was well received, especially when improved by curtailments. It is said, and upon the supposed authority of Miss Pope, that it was acted twenty times, deserved, and might have had a longer run, but was stopped by Sheridan. It had been agreed that the author's relations were to have an additional benefit, if the play should be acted above twenty times. In all this story, I do not believe that there is a word of truth : I cannot discover that "The Curfew" was performed in the first season more than thirteen times ; it never had what is properly called a run, for it never was played three nights consecutively but once, and two nights once ; the rest were separate performances, such as would distinguish a piece barely able to keep its legs, but not sufficiently healthy to run. Poor Sheridan ! undoubtedly he had many faults, political and moral, and many were imputed to him which he never had ; but, such a scandalous meanness as this anecdote implies, was to him, I should almost say, impossible. It would have been not only unjust and cruel to the author's representatives, but injurious to the theatre, which could much better bear the donation of an extra benefit than the ex-

tion of a successful drama. A little light is thrown upon the subject by a statement that Sir Richard Phillips gave a certain sum for the copyright, with a promise of more if the number of performances exceeded twenty. On this basis the other fable may have been founded, but the vegetable-munching knight could have had no influence in stopping the piece, nor did its progress cease, until the naked benches gave broad hints to the managers that its day was over.

A new candidate for a few days' favour was Mr. Cherry, who produced (9th April) a comedy called "A Day in London," in which Bannister played Jack Melange. Notwithstanding the declared disapprobation of the audience, it was three times forced upon the stage, but, after that, shrouded in the night of oblivion. Jack Melange is described as a generous eccentric. A contemporary critic says, "Mr. Bannister was, we know not what, but his sole witticism so peculiarly belongs to himself, that no actor who has not lost his fingers by the explosion of a gun can utter it. He says, 'I am no sportsman,—indeed, I never went out shooting but once, and then I made a *bad hand* of it!'"

This good-humoured allusion to his recent accident could not fail to please.

To these original characters, Bannister added that of Jack Junk, in "The Birth Day," a comedy in

three acts, altered by Tom Dibdin from Kotzebue. The part was admirably suited to the actor; it displays all the roughness of an old sailor, united to a feeling heart and a sound understanding. The language is not affectedly technical, nor are the sentiments forced or unnatural. By the side of Captain Barham, Jack cannot rise into first-rate importance; but in the full proportion of a boatswain to a captain, he must be rated in the company who form this play.

Bannister was not engaged in the summer at the Haymarket, nor did he visit any provincial theatre. He was attending to his health, and engaged in preparing an entertainment, of which a particular account will appear in a future page.

On the recommencement of the Drury Lane performances (17th September 1807), he was appointed stage-manager, but his powers were limited, his authority unsupported, and the treasury in distress; consequently his exertions could not be expected either to enforce regularity in the company, or procure for the public attractive entertainment, and he soon resigned his situation to Mr. Wroughton. Yet upon the whole the season was not unsuccessful, at least, several productions were most favourably received.

To add to his difficulties, Bannister, in the early part of the season, suffered considerably from the

attacks of his persevering enemy, the gout, which for some time confined him to his house.

His first new character was Storm, a captain of invalids, in Mr. Kenney's melo-drama, "Ella Rosenberg." No one could dispute the player's title to rank in that honourable but unenvied corps, and on his first appearance (19th November), the audience gratulated him with warm plaudits; their force was not diminished by the circumstance that he came on singing "Begone dull care." The part was well suited to his abilities, although not calculated to draw forth all his powers. Firmness, honour, benevolence, truly felt and warmly expressed, had always been and still were, good materials in his hands. The piece was eminently successful; it had a real run, not of two or three, but of twelve or thirteen nights consecutively, and was repeated during the season about forty times.

Mr. J. Brandon, author of some "Fragments in imitation of Sterne," undertook to dramatize a romance by D'Israeli, called "The Mejnoun and Leila." It is "extant in very choice English," in a small volume which he published in 1800. In adapting this fable to the drama, Mr. Brandon showed no great skill. "Kais" is the name of the piece and of its hero; Leila of the lady. They are pretty much what the Oriental fable, which supplied matter to Mr. D'Israeli, had made them. The

additional characters are let in, merely to people the stage; but they talk neither wit nor humour, and make out events without much plot, in which the audience could not possibly feel an interest. But *Kais* was perfectly successful on its first representation (11th February 1808), repeated more than a fortnight without interruption, and acted twenty times before the end of the season. Very true! and for all this the author was entitled to little praise, the town to no censure. Excellent music, admirably sung by Braham and the other performers, with scenery of great beauty and variety, formed a charm, which many would not rouse their judgment to dispel, and so the piece lived. Bannister's character was that of Almorán, or Marvellozo, in one of his disguises, who out of love for Rozella, a fair Greek who had been kidnapped from Circassia, plays the parts of a story-teller and a performer, and incurs several alarming perils; at last all ends happily, how, or why, would be an unsuccessful inquiry. The author published his opera, which is in four acts, with a preface, in which he lets fall the whole weight of his "leaden mace," as George Chalmers called it, on two gentlemen whom he considered to have noticed it with discourtesy in "Bell's Weekly Messenger" and "The Examiner."

Mr. Kenney produced (31st March), "The World," a comedy, which succeeded, and was played

on more than twenty nights. Its merits were sufficient to justify the public favour, but had a different fate awaited it, its faults would have warranted its condemnation. Without analyzing the plot, or the particular distinctions of other characters, it may suffice to say, that Echo performed by Bannister was one of great dramatic force and moral utility. It was that of a young man, who, for want of confidence in himself, submits to be the imitator and the dupe of some of the most insignificant of mankind. Influenced by the fear of their ridicule he renounces a virtuous and interesting object of affection, treats with levity and disdain a prudent and honourable friend, adopts, even to servile imitation, the manners, tones, and sentiments of low and worthless apes of fashion, and, neglecting his business, runs into debaucheries, without the manners requisite to adorn, or a taste sufficiently depraved to relish them. The force of circumstances and the struggle of inborn virtue emancipate him from this slavish and odious chain, before he has descended into that abyss of vice and misery to which his misguided steps so evidently tend, and the useful, the important moral of the piece is well disclosed in a short dialogue. Echo screws himself up to a declaration that he will act virtuously, even although *the world* may rail. The world, as he explains it, “scuffed me from the door of my virtuous love,

sneered at my want of reverence for riches, and hunted me to pursuits from which my heart and my conscience must ever revolt."

"The world!" (a better reasoner replies,) "unmerited libel on the human character—and from one who has a spirit to do it honour—the world!—some circle of paltry spirits that surrounded you! Cramped in their faculties from generation to generation! Slaves of prejudice in the second and third degree! And could you surrender the independence of your mind to such as these? Fie on't!—'tis thus that error sneaks with authority, and the majesty of truth and virtue is defrauded of its homage by a phantom that a dastardly servility creates, and calls—the world!"

This lesson, so useful in shielding timid and ingenuous youth from the disgrace and calamity which result from want of firmness and honest self-confidence, cannot be too strongly enforced, or too tenaciously retained. To Mr. Kenney it is no small praise, that in one season, the town received from him two pieces so conspicuously successful as "Ella Rosenberg" and "The World."

In the course of this period Drury Lane sustained some losses of theatrical services, which were not easily to be repaired. Barrymore, in a huff at being fined for non-attendance, threw up his engagement: he was a sensible and useful performer,

seldom aspiring to be great, but never descending into absurdity or inefficiency. His range of parts was inconceivably extensive ; all the departments of the drama, tragedy, comedy, opera, and farce, furnished him with employment. He was what is termed a sure card ; whether accident, pride, caprice, or indisposition occasioned the absence of a player, Barrymore was always ready to supply his place, and if he did not "top his part," was always, at least, respectable.

Signora Storace, on whose merits and popular estimation it is not necessary to descant, took for her benefit (30th May) "The Cabinet," with "Love laughs at Locksmiths ;" it was her night of farewell. To show their regard for her, Naldi, D'Egville's pupils, and some of the comic performers with extra songs, assisted. Colman wrote for her an address, which was set to music ; and she sang it with great pathos and effect.

Kelly, in his *Reminiscences*, says, she took leave in her favourite part of Margaretta, in "No song, no supper ;" an absolute mistake ; but probably honest Mic was led into it by confounding, in his memory, her benefit and retirement with his own. He appeared for the last time (17th June) in Cobb's popular farce, but he delivered no farewell address. "I had been," he says, "chiefly the principal male singer for twenty years ; but I did not think myself of suf-

ficient consequence to take a formal leave of the public." As this extract from Kelly's book is introduced with a blunder, and terminated by an unexpected trait of modesty, it is fit to add, that no collection of theatrical memoirs abounds more largely in interesting anecdote, or displays a heart more imbued with kindness, and more free from all appearance of envy, dislike, or a disposition to slander.

To close this list of defections ; Miss Pope (26th May) spoke her valedictory address, after performing for her own benefit, and for the only time, Deborah Dowlas, in "The Heir at Law." For half a century this lady had occupied a prominent station in the theatre, affording delight to successive generations, and changing her ground, as the flight of years or the exigencies of the stage required, but never foregoing her excellence. In 1756, as a child, she appeared in a farce called "Lilliput ;" in 1761, Churchill celebrated her in the *Rosciad*, in these terms :

" With all the native vigour of sixteen
Among the merry troop conspicuous seen, .
See lively Pope advance in jig and trip
Corinna, Cherry Honeycomb, and Snip.
Not without art, but yet to nature true,
She charms the town with humour just, yet new.
Cheer'd by her promise we the loss deplore
The fatal time when Clive shall be no more.

In her further progress she charmed the town

with infinite varieties of excellence, sustaining in the old comedies the high estimation fixed by previous performers on the parts she played, and stamping on new ones, such as Mrs. Candour, Miss Alserip, and Tilburina, the indelible marks of her own taste and genius. And when, at last, she played old women, such as the Duenna, Mrs. Hiedelberg, old Lady Lambert, and Mrs. Maggs, although the bounding, lively girl depicted by Churchill was no longer to be seen, Miss Pope, with her characteristic skill, taste, and judgment, was always there.

Deprived of these coadjutors, and unaided by any new ones, who could, even in appearance, compensate for their absence, the next season at Drury Lane commenced on the 17th of September 1808, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, son of the principal proprietor, being at the head of a board of management.

Bannister's first original part was Joe, in "The Fortune-teller," a farce, most inexorably damned on the first night (29th September); and the slight account which remains of it, affords no temptation to scrutiny or analysis.

Much pains had been bestowed by Mr. Bishop in composing the music for a new opera, "The Circassian bride," by Mr. Robert Ward, on which great hopes were reposed. It was played (23rd February 1809), and Bannister acted the part of Ben Blunt,

an English sailor. So little was this piece calculated to acquire favour, that, at the end of the first act, its condemnation appeared certain; before the termination of the second, Mr. Bishop, who, on that occasion only, conducted the band, quitted his seat in despair; and when, at the close of the third, Bannister advanced to announce its repetition, his meaning might be guessed, but his phrases could not be heard.

An attempt at repetition was prevented by an affecting and tremendous catastrophe,—the total destruction of this beautiful theatre by fire.

Some events in human life take a course so strange, so opposite to the direction they would receive from a moderate exercise of common prudence or foresight, that we are almost compelled to admit, that for some strong, although undiscerned purpose, Providence blinds the eyes of men, and they are left to stray in the paths of destiny, unaided by that wisdom on which so much, and often so justly, they pride themselves. In the exercise of their sagacity, the founders of the new theatre had provided a reservoir in the roof sufficient to inundate the building, and an iron curtain, which, even if one half were consumed, would protect the other. The minds of those who regulated the interior management might naturally have been expected to turn toward the contingency of fire, since, only a few

months before (20th September 1808) Covent Garden theatre had been so destroyed, with a great loss of property, a dreadful sacrifice of the treasures of art, and a still more dreadful accumulation of human misery ; twenty persons having lost their lives, and a much greater number having sustained grievous maims and injuries.

In the alarm which this event occasioned, and apprehending that flakes of fire, borne by the wind from the neighbouring conflagration, might be injurious to their house, proper persons had been stationed on the roof of Drury Lane theatre, to inspect the means of defence against fire, and to use them, if necessary.

In the night which followed that on which "The Circassian Bride" had been represented (25th February) at eleven o'clock, a person residing near the theatre, roused those who were employed to keep the house, with an alarm of fire. The flames raged with uncontrolled rapidity, until in two hours the whole interior was destroyed ; the roof fell in, and the statue of Apollo, on the top, was precipitated also into the midst of the fire.

Fortunately, this dreadful event occurred on a Friday in Lent, when no audience was assembled. From the conjectural accounts of the causes of the fire, it is possible that, had an audience been present, it could not have occurred ; but those are mere con-

jectures. And it is awful to think of the misery which must have ensued, if a numerous body of people had been collected where a conflagration so rapid was raging, or even to be apprehended. They would have found no protection from the precautions, for the iron curtain was not believed to be in working condition, and the reservoir was empty.

Some of the performers were deprived by this event of all they possessed, and many of those in the lower departments were threatened with utter destitution, from the discontinuance of their salaries. For their relief, under a temporary permission, the Opera House was opened six nights. Mrs. Siddons and Madame Catalani generously lent their aid ; and from the sum which was produced, although there was no possibility of remunerating players of a higher class, those whose stipends did not exceed three pounds a week, obtained the amount of their losses and their salaries in full.

Amidst all the difficulties arising from an overwhelming debt, and from a character for imprudence and irregularity which destroyed all confidence in him, Mr. Sheridan projected the means of restoring the theatre ; and ultimately, submitting himself to very rigid restraints, he succeeded. In fact, the respect to his genius and talents, and the regard to his person, notwithstanding his undisguised failings, were widely extended. On the night of the fire,

this feeling was liberally shown in that assembly which he had for many years charmed with his eloquence, and delighted with his wit. 'The House of Commons was in full debate, when the glare at their window showed the existence of a fire, and the voice of information disclosed its place. In compliment to the feelings of Mr. Sheridan, leading members on both sides offered to adjourn the debate ; but he declined the accommodation.

Bannister felt, in common with all the distinguished performers, for those who were menaced with ruin by this great calamity. His personal loss was not considerable ; and it was more than compensated by the liberal conduct of Mr. Rundell, who immediately wrote to him :

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have great pleasure in enclosing you a bank-note 500/., which I hope you will do me the favour to accept, in consideration of the loss you may sustain from the late serious change to your concerns. I remain, dear sir, with the greatest regard for your welfare,

“ Your friend and humble servant,

“ PHILIP RUNDELL.

Ludgate Hill, 27th February 1809.

“ I presume there will be a subscription opened for those in distress.”

If the style of this letter does not rise above that of the daily communications required in business, the sentiment both to the individual addressed, and the body to which he belonged, entitles the writer to high commendation for his liberality, and for his promptitude in its display.

As the Covent Garden company were in possession of the Haymarket, those expelled from Drury Lane found a refuge in a theatre of small size and not altogether finished, the Lyceum in the Strand; and here their season closed.

In two new pieces at this theatre Bannister had characters. In the first (21st April) "Grieving is a folly," by Mr. Richard Leigh, he played Crape, who had been a strolling actor, but marrying the widow of an undertaker, performed funerals instead of farces. The wit created by such a combination may easily be imagined; but the jokes are well written, and lost no portion of their power in Bannister's delivery. With the plot he had little to do; but, after the play, which was well received, he spoke an epilogue written by T. Dibdin.

Mr. Lewis, in aid of the distressed company, gave a farce (1st of May) called "Temper; or, the Domestic Tyrant." As it was not printed, I do not know even the name of the part which Bannister played; but he is described as a clever servant, and his performance as droll and effective. In one passage, he

must have been completely at home. His master, the domestic tyrant, a man subdued by nothing but his own ill-temper and that of his intended wife, having discharged him, Bannister returns as Monsieur Rigadon, a French dancing-master, and representing that he has been sent by the termagant lady, inflicts a severe, though ludicrous punishment, on the impatient aggressor. The piece was played eight times: it is said to be taken from "Le Grondeur," but those who dive deeper into mysteries, trace it to "The Grumbler," by Sir Charles Sidley.

For his benefit (15th May) Bannister performed Ollapod and Tristram Fickle, and acted in "Sharp-set; or the Village Hotel," an interlude, modestly called by no higher name than a dramatic sketch.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1807—1808—1809.

Preparation of Bannister's Budget ;—other performances of the same kind.—Plan of Bannister's Entertainment,—assistance afforded by Colman.—His narrative on the subject.—Bannister commanded to read it at Windsor.—His reception by the Royal Family.—Structure and specimens of *The Budget*.—The old sexton,—beginning with a consultation of physicians and an excursion to Longford.—Two ways of telling the same story,—an affecting narrative by a chaplain,—the same, by a boatswain—the only persons saved from an appalling shipwreck.—The Budget eminently successful.—Bannister's grateful return to Colman.—Disappointment from Drury Lane.—Purchases a picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds,—which is bought from him by the Earl of Egremont.—Liberal conduct of that nobleman.—Letters on the occasion.

DURING the period embraced in the foregoing chapter, Bannister was arranging and preparing an entertainment, which would depend entirely on his own personal exertions, and which, as it was free from active or stage display, would not be much interrupted by slight illness or casual infirmity. It was a lecture intitled "*Bannister's Budget*."

It was not a new undertaking for one performer to attempt to fix the attention and obtain the plau-

ditions of an audience during a whole evening. George Alexander Stephens had, many years before, essayed the enterprize, in his "Lecture on Heads," which was often repeated by Lee Lewes. Kean, the father of the successful tragedian, had given, on many nights, an entertainment of recitations, songs, and imitations. Collins had exhibited his "Brush for rubbing off the rust of care," in which there were many lively anecdotes, shrewd observations, and songs, which deservedly obtained great popularity, especially "Date obolum Belisario." But, above all, Charles Dibdin, year after year, at the theatre in the Strand, and in one of his own erecting called Sanspareil, in Leicester Place, had been giving delight, and, for a time, acquiring great emolument, by means of entertainments under different names, in which he not only pleased but instructed the public; advancing the cause of morals by natural and energetic sentiments, and raising the flame of patriotism and loyalty by songs and speeches, just in conception and illustration, and impressive on the memory and the judgment by vivid imagery and pointed expression. His sea-songs form a class by themselves; they are calculated alike to cheer solitude and to animate social assemblages, to raise the laugh and the tear, and to engrave on the heart benevolence, courage, and a trust in Providence. Mathews, confined as yet within the walls of the

theatre, had not emancipated his genius to rove and revel "at Home."

Bannister himself devised the plan of this Entertainment, which was intended as a vehicle for animated description, exhilarating monologue, song, both unmixed, and interspersed with prose, anecdotes serious and burlesque, sentiment and bagatelle, broad laugh, generous feeling, and moral instruction. The original outline of the matter, and some of the songs, were contributed by several of his friends; among them were Cherry, Dibdin, and Jack Taylor; but as all their parts did not make a whole, they were submitted to the care of his friend Colman. George has himself given an account of the circumstances under which his aid was obtained, and who that can have recourse to his words, would use any other?

"In 1807," he says, "after having slaved at some dramatic composition,—I forget what,—I had resolved to pass one entire week in luxurious sloth. I was then so disgusted with pen, ink, and paper, that had I been an absolute monarch, with cruelty equal to my despotism, I would have made it felony, in any subject, who presented a petition to me written with, or upon, any stationer's ware whatsoever.

"At this crisis, just as I was beginning the first morning's sacrifice at the altar of my darling goddess,

Indolence, enter Jack Bannister with a huge manuscript under his left arm ! This, he told me, consisted of loose materials for an Entertainment, with which he meant to ‘skirr the country,’ under the title of ‘Bannister’s Budget ;’ but, unless I reduced the chaos into some order for him, and that instantly, he should lose his tide, and with it his emoluments for the season. In such a case, there was no balancing between two alternatives, so I deserted my darling goddess to drudge through the week for my old companion. To correct the crudities he had brought me, by polishing, expunging, adding, in short, almost re-writing them, was, it must be confessed, labouring ‘under the horrors of digestion ;’ but the toil was completed at the week’s end, and away went Jack Bannister into the country with his Budget.

“In the Budget,” he continues, “I have so much altered some of the songs, that they might almost be called my own. I do not arrogate to myself the merit of having improved them so much as Sir John Cutler, who mended his worsted stockings till he darned them into silk ; and, if I plead guilty of having had a hand in the texture, let the primary manufacturers remember, that I have left enough of their own original stuff to convict them as partakers in the crime.”

Before he commenced his voyage of adventure,

the rumour of his intention had reached his royal patrons at Windsor, and produced the following command :

“ Windsor, June 11th, 1807.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have received the commands of her royal highness the Princess Elizabeth to write to you, and desire you will name a day which will be most convenient to you, to come down to Windsor to read before their Majesties.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Your obliged, humble servant,

“ ROBT. BRAWN.

“ I will thank you for an early answer.”

Those who are unacquainted with the etiquette of courts would augur nothing from this official note, which was written by a favourite page of his Majesty, but a cold, formal, and almost repulsive reception. Bannister knew the gracious mind and quality of his inviters better ; and it would appear by the following letter from his daughter Anne, to her aunt Mrs. Swendall, that his welcome exceeded his anticipations.

“ London, June 23rd, 1807.

“ MY DEAR AUNT,

“ Papa was so busy previous to his departure, that he had not time to write as he intended. His

hand is a great deal better; he can now use his knife and fork with ease. Mamma had a letter this morning from Mr. Stephen Morgan, in which he informs her, that Betsey was brought to bed of a very fine boy on the 25th of April, and both are doing very well: she sent a bit of the child's hair, which is very like her own. Papa has got a lecture, with which he will take his tour this summer. It consists of recitation and comic songs. The King sent for him to Windsor last week, to hear it, and invited a large party of the nobility. The royal family were much delighted with it. The Queen said to him, 'Why, Mr. Bannister, I hear you have two daughters married!—it seems but the other day that I remember *you* a boy!' The Princess Sophia likewise spoke to him, on hearing he was rather alarmed, it being the first time he had attempted that kind of representation,—she said, 'So, Mr. Bannister, they tell me you are frightened: I declare, if you don't do it well, I shall hiss you.'

“Believe me, yours very affectionately,

“ANNE BANNISTER.”

This Entertainment was divided into three parts, and the recitation occupied about two hours and a half. From its miscellaneous composition, no distinct plan can be exhibited; of its structure, one specimen is already given, in the account of Bannis-

ter's first interview with Garrick, and I think no apology necessary for inserting two others ; but they can only be adequately appreciated by those who have witnessed his unrivalled recitation. In the first, called "The Old Sexton," he made an admirable display of his known skill in representing, without exposing it to ridicule, the extreme infirmity, mental and corporeal, of old age ; in the other, "Two ways of telling the same story," an appalling occurrence is related with characteristic propriety and equally affecting energy, by a clergyman and a boatswain ; and Bannister, in personating, gave identity to each.

"THE SUPERANNUATED SEXTON.

"I happened, not long ago, to be so reduced by a bilious disorder and a long train of nervous symptoms, that my upholsterer (who is also an undertaker) called upon me, and said, he hoped, as he had the pleasure to make my side-board, he might soon have the happiness of furnishing my funeral. As I had some strength left, and did not owe him a farthing for furniture, I kicked him down the first flight of a stair-carpet he had nailed down for me. The street-door being open, he ran with his head bump into the stomach of a man bawling 'pickled salmon,' whereby the fish-bawler's stomach became

as much disordered as those of his customers. Upon reflection, my conscience told me, that it is hardly fair (since in the way of trade some must live by the dying) to kick an undertaker who asks custom for a coffin. So to make reparation, I sent him word that I would call in three physicians. My undertaker was so satisfied with this promise, that he assured me all thoughts of prosecution on his part should be dead and buried, provided I stuck to my doctors, and my executors gave him the last job he could perform for me. I kept my word, and convened my three physicians. They felt my pulse every day during a week ; then regularly closeted themselves to talk of the weather, scandal, and politics, for about five minutes, ordered me sometimes a pipe of bottled bark, sometimes a hogshead of buckthorn, took a guinea a-piece, and then drove off to the next sufferer. This, in London, is called a consultation. On the seventh morning, having grown fretful, I bolted in upon them, and interrupted their mock debate upon my case, just as Dr. Doublechops was disputing with Licentiate Lank-jaws, whether, if Bonaparte cut off our trade with the Turks, we should run short of rhubarb ? ‘Gentlemen,’ says I, ‘one word,—if you don’t depart entirely I shall—’ ‘Sir,’ stuttered Sir David Doublechops, ‘I tell you plainly,’ (stuttering,) ‘if you dismiss us, you’ll die directly, and this I pro-

nounce without the smallest hesitation.' Licentiate Lankjaws, as he looked in the glass, wheezing like a Middlesex post-horse at a Brentford contested election, with a face as thin as the edge of a smooth farthing, shrilly uttered, 'Everybody who hears how husky you are, and sees your emaciated countenance, must swear that without our skill you'll go into a galloping consumption.'

"Dr. Mum was the third physician; his rule is to open his hand, and very seldom his mouth at a consultation; so he shook his block and said nothing. To end all dispute, I told them that whether I were in a consumption or not, my purse was, and as to further fees I must pronounce in that case a decided decline. This speech was like an electrical shock to the doctors, and cleansed my house of the faculty, in the taking of a pill.

"They were scarcely out of the passage, when a favourite cat jumped upon my table, swept off fifteen phials of draughts to be taken every two hours, and smashed them to shivers. This seemed to say, as plain as a cat can speak, 'Since we have got rid of the doctors, why don't we demolish the physic?' As Montaigne could philosophize with his cat, I thought I might take a sick man's privilege to be whimsically silly with mine; so opening the window, 'Puss,' says I, as I threw the remaining bottles

one by one into the back area, 'we are ending the farce of a consultation of physicians, and this, Puss, is the catastrophe.' As I was throwing out the last phial, my servant came up to remind me that the area had been whitewashed the day before. Then I had spoiled it, I supposed? 'Certainly,' he observed, 'physic had not made it look whiter.'— 'Why not?' said I, 'it has made me look whiter, a great deal.' The fellow smiled, 'I merely meant, sir, what you have thrown there has done no good.'— 'I should not have thrown it there, honest John, if I had thought it could do any.'

"Three physicians sent out of the house, and two smart things said to one's domestic, (not reckoning the pun to my cat,) in the course of five minutes, quickened the vital circulation, and quickening the circulation in a frame more unstrung than decayed, more torpid than feverish, is half the battle gained over death, when he aims his javelin at a knight whom time has not marked with his furrows as unfit for tilts and tournaments. 'By St. George,' I exclaimed, 'I will not quit the lists; if I am to be sent to heaven, it shall not be by the blue devils!' The man stared. 'Order me a post-chaise; I will go for a day or two into the country.' In half an hour the chaise was at the door, and as I told the post-boy to take me to any inn, out

of town, where I might have good air, a clean room, and no clatter, in two hours and a quarter more I was at Longford.

“ Longford is an humble, straggling village on the road to Windsor, about fifteen miles from the metropolis. As the landlord helped me out of the chaise, ‘ You may see, friend,’ said I, ‘ I am an invalid, and I am glad to observe written on your sign “ Live Fish ;” let me have some dressed for dinner directly ; ’tis indeed the only thing I can eat, but to serve the house, you may add anything else you have in the larder that’s delicate.’ I waited till I grew faint, when the landlord bounced into the room, and smacked down under my nose a fat baked shoulder of mutton, smothered with onions. ‘ Zounds !’ says, I, ‘ where’s the fish ? I expected trout from the stream here, or gudgeon, or eels,—or crayfish at least,—or—’ He assured me that they never had any but salt-water fish, and that only came from London once a week, unless by particular order. ‘ Then your sign tells an untruth,’ said I. ‘ An Irish gentleman, sir,’ said he, ‘ accused me of that last Friday, for when I brought him to table as fine and fresh a haddock as ever swam in the sea, he flew into a violent passion, and cried out, “ Landlord, your board writes up live fish, and by St. Patrick, you scoundrel, this boiled haddock’s as dead as a herring.” ’

“ I begged him to remove the mutton, and with a glass of negus and a couple of poached eggs I gratified a sickly appetite as well as I could. As I had visited my bed-room, which was clean and airy, and looked over a neat garden, in a warm aspect, and as my landlord seemed anxious to be obliging, and to cater well for me, provided I stayed on the morrow, I was loath to quit him. ‘ What shall I do here, landlord,’ said I, (as I was going to bed,) ‘ if I stay with you a day or two ?’—‘ Why, sir,’ says he, ‘ you may see a wedding to-morrow morning at our parish church.’—‘ A wedding !’—‘ Yes, sir ; Giles Hogtail is to be married to Kitty Cockchafer ; they are but poor folks ;—there ’ll be quite a crowd, and they’ve hired a fiddler : ’twill be rare and gay, for the young couple are very much beloved here, and very *populous* in the neighbourhood.’ I resolved to be present at this ceremony, and as I undressed myself, I could not help reflecting on the lottery of weddings,—the blanks and the prizes ! But fortune smiles here, said I to myself, on the votaries of marriage. We are in the vicinity of Windsor ; ’tis there Hymen sublimates his flame, and majesty worships at his altar. If an observance of the mutual softer duties smooth those rugged paths of life which the most exalted are born to tread,—if the minutes of sequestered peace yield roses to requite us for the thorny hours of worldly care,—how

enviable must be the august individuals who can say, ‘ Note us in our intervals of retirement, observe us affectionate to each other, loving, and beloved by our children.’ Witness a monarch, who, while he labours to establish national happiness by public exertion, promotes domestic bliss by private example !

“ As the wedding was to take place at ten, I desired to be called at eight ; but I left my shutter half open that the daylight might awaken me, for I have observed that the sun is much more punctual than a chambermaid. The sun, however, blazed in my eyes and roused me at seven, like the over-careful servant who shook his master when he was snoring to tell him he had an hour more to sleep. While I was dressing I ordered breakfast below, and as I had told the landlord over-night that I had had three doctors every morning for the last week, I found when I descended a large glass of rum and milk on the table.—‘ What ’s this, friend ?’ said I. ‘ A doctor, sir,’ says the landlord ; ‘ and two more will be ready for you in a few minutes.’ The mistake was soon rectified, and thanks to the air and the absence of all doctors, I ate two rounds of toast, drank a cup of tea, and set out for the parish church.

“ The couple had been in such haste to be married, that they had left the church before I arrived ; but

as I saw the sexton sitting on a stone-bench in the porch, I walked towards him to inquire the particulars of the wedding. He was a little withered old man, whose eye transiently sparkled with gaiety; then lost its lustre, as if fatigued with the effort. It bespoke natural cheerfulness struggling against old age and decrepitude, and seemed to say for him, ‘I have taken a long journey, but though I am ready to drop, my spirits are still willing to go on.’ His face was wizen, but it was ruddy, like a cherry-cheeked apple which has been gathered sound and kept till it is shrivelled. I should have supposed his age about eighty, if he had not told me in the beginning of our conversation that he should be ninety next December. ‘Ay, ay,’ said he, laughing always as he began his periods, and finishing them with a sigh; ‘Ha! ha! I was born in the winter 1716, old style.—There was a hard frost and a fair on the Thames; ha! ha! ha!—rare days,—but I was a pretty little baby—’twas in the second year of George the First, two years after I was born, the northern lights appeared,—and in 1727 I had the measles, and Sir Isaac Newton died—ha! ha!—that’s a long time back, but they are merry times to think on,—heigho!’—‘Well, friend,’ said I, ‘you have had a wedding here to-day.’—‘Ha! ha! yes; young Giles Hogtail to Kitty Cockchafer,—she’s a bouncing wench,—a girl for all work.—I buried Giles’s grand-

father in eighty-one—(there he lies with a wooden tomb-stone over his head—ha ! ha !) when his majesty's great star-gazer at Slough peeped through his large spy-glass and found out the Georgy Sidus !—he must be a jolly man, he sits up so much o 'nights, —ha ! ha !—heigho !'—' Well, friend, I hope the young couple will be happy ; but marriage is a serious thing.'—' Ha ! ha ! ha !—very serious thing indeed,—I have had three wives ! and buried the last myself ; she lies in that corner, next to Mr. Hings, the publican, who kept the Marquis of Granby, —when they were alive, she was one of his best customers, for poor Betty was fond of a drop ; ay, I was very happy with all my wives, and as merry as the day is long, ha ! ha !—poor Sal !—no, I mean Bess,—no, Margery,—I mean all three,—ha ! ha ! ha ! —heigho !'—' How long have you been a sexton ?'—' Let me see, till the year forty-two, I was journeyman to Sam Suett the butcher ; I left him, because he knock'd me down with a marrow-bone, for saying he robbed the chalk-pits to whiten his veal,—so in forty-three I turned foot-soldier, and marched into Germany, and had a bullet shot through my left arm at the battle of Dettingen,—ha ! ha ! ha ! it is quite a pleasure to think of such things,—ha ! ha ! —heigho !'—' But I suppose you have been in other engagements ?'—' Ha ! ha !—yes, yes, several : I served under the Duke of Cumberland against the

Scotch rebels when they were defeated at Culloden on the sixteenth of April. I got no wound in Scotland, but I remember I got the Scotch fiddle—ha ! ha ! ha !—heigho ! But in seventy-eight I began to be too old for a soldier, and being unfit for service, I married my last wife, buxom Betsy as they called her ; and liking to have something to do to keep me gay, I turned sexton and grave-digger here in my native parish—ha ! ha ! ha !—that's just twenty years ago. I have had a good deal of business, thank Heaven ! and buried all my friends and relations ; and as I go on in good robust health, I am as happy as the day is long—ha ! ha ! ha !—heigho !

“ I put a piece of silver into the dry palm of this delving Methusalem, and as I left him and walked ruminating to my inn, ‘ What is the grave ? ’ said I : ‘ yonder is a feeble object tottering on its brink, who has been digging pits these twenty years to bury half his parish, and still he is cheerful ! How are we to account for this cheerfulness among men dying and born to die ? Certainly religion and hope will explain the matter ; I much fear that the certainty of death gives Religion a joy which might go to sleep without it ; and then follows Hope always whispering *to-morrow*. You *must* die, says Certainty ; I am preparing for it, says Religion ; but not to-day, says Hope ! ’ ”

“TWO WAYS OF TELLING THE SAME STORY.

“ One of our ships of war was cast away on her voyage from Jamaica, and the circumstances of the wreck were related by two persons (very different in their characters and education) who were snatched from the fury of the waves; the chaplain and the boatswain, who stuck by the vessel till she went to pieces, then clung to a loose plank till they were picked up by a merchantman and safely landed in England. The chaplain thus began :

“ ‘ The chief passenger on board our unfortunate ship, was an officer in his Majesty’s army, whose manners and sentiments, while they commanded that deference due to the bravery of his own profession, claimed the respect which is given to the morality of mine. His wife accompanied him on the voyage; her beauty was dazzling to the eye (that indeed is little!) but there was a mild expression of feminine goodness in her countenance which interested the heart. They had two children on board, a boy six years old, and a girl who seemed about a twelve-month younger than her little brother. They were lovely infants! but they have perished! A faithful negro (a man-servant) was the attendant on this family. On the tenth day of our voyage the sailors had expressed their fears of a storm, from indica-

tions with which I am unacquainted : their predictions were but too true ! The night became gloomy, and the moon, which had risen watery and pale, was frequently obscured by thick rolling clouds that threatened to deluge our devoted ship. A hurricane ensued—the ocean heaved—the strained planks yielded to the lashing waves — the thunder roared, and the lightning played round the ghastly faces of each despairing wretch, clinging to the masts and ropes, expectant of their fate ! The captain and crew toiled through the horrors of the night, and the passenger, whom I have already mentioned, was no idle spectator of our distress. The English officer ran nimbly up the shrouds, the negro-servant followed him with equal intrepidity, but as the officer reached the top, a cord gave way ; he had just time to exclaim, ‘ Oh God ! my wife and children ! ’ and fell headlong into the boiling ocean. The negro dashed in to save, but perished with his master ! The wife at this instant rushed upon deck, grasping an infant in each hand—she glanced wildly upon the ocean,—a sudden flash presented to her view her husband, clasped by the faithful negro, sinking together beneath the waves. She uttered a dreadful shriek, and fell lifeless !

“ ‘ The morning’s dawn was ushered in by peals of thunder.—In vain the poor innocents called upon their mother ! Alas ! they were now orphans ! ‘ Do

not disturb her,' said the boy, ' my mother is asleep ; let 's go and look for my father,' and he threw his little arms about his sister's neck ;—at that instant with one *tremendous crash* the vessel burst asunder !

“ ‘ The boatswain and myself, of all our wretched crew, remain to pay our adoration to that Providence who stretched forth a saving arm, and snatched us from the deep !’

“ Now honest Jack Hauyard, the boatswain, totally forgetting the perils he had escaped, talked of past danger as a thing of course, and laughed over his grog at the storm he had weathered ! ‘ Come, my hearties,’ says he, ‘ what signifies grief ? why should the pumps of the heart set the scuppers of the eyes a-going ? Life’s but a short voyage,—plain sailing to some folks,—d—d cramp navigation to others. I have had my share ! but what then ? why in that there last voyage of mine from the west,—my limbs ! there was your works,—sailed from Kingston Harbour,—crew aboard,—all well,—cabin passengers ; Captain and his wife and children, and little Bumbo, his black, as full of tricks as a kitten—splinter me ! the tenth night,—moon shining,—all at once grew as dark as pitch, and looked as round and as dull as an unwashed platter,—the wind set in from the Nor’od, rough as a Norway bear, and roared loud enough to blow the devil’s head off ! Down we hauled the topgallant-mast, the thunder

and lightning whizzed about our sconces ! I could scarcely keep my bearings, and staggered as if I had got my grog aboard. The officer, our passenger, thought as how he'd bear a hand aloft ; but being a land-lubber, d'ye see, he slipt his stays, and tumbled clean over-board in the turning of a handspike. Poor Blackey never waited for sailing orders, but slipt the cable of an honest heart, and from the chains took his departure after his master, and set sail on a voyage of discovery. The poor gentlewoman screamed as if the cordage of her life had given way, and capsizing, fell upon her face as if the storm of grief had overset her ! But when the little ones began to pipe ! I was forced to swab the spray from my bows and sheer off to my duty. It blew great guns ! bang went the mizen ! all was confusion, from the gib-boom to the croget-yard,—a sea unshipped the rudder, washed overboard sheep, goats, hen-coops, pigs, women, and water-casks !

“ The sailors sung out fire ! from the starboard quarter,—the timbers groaned again, unshipped their seams, and she blew up with a most infernal crash ! My eyes ! how I stared when I found my life-stays had not given way, and I was still rated able on the books of mortality. I thought at first I had been in Davy Jones's locker ! but I looked round and saw myself seated on three planks that had stuck together, with the chaplain alongside to pray for me,

and I, all alive and kicking ! Jack Haulyard, captain of the wreck, as I had been some few hours before boatswain of the Terrible ! ”

This Budget not only produced that for which the budget of a Chancellor of the Exchequer is calculated, profit, but which, in such a budget, is never contemplated, fame to the maker and pleasure to the contributors. Its success occasioned one more result which illustrates character : I shall give it in the words of Colman.

“ Several months after his departure he returned to town, and I inquired, of course, what success ? So great, he answered, that in consequence of the gain which had accrued to him through my means, and which he was certain would still accrue (as he now considered the Budget to be an annual income for some years to come,) he must insist on cancelling a bond which I had given him for money lent to me. I was astonished, for I had never dreamt of fee or reward. To prove he was in earnest, I extract a paragraph from a letter which he wrote to me from Shrewsbury.

“ ‘ For fear of accidents, I think it necessary to inform you that Fladgate, your attorney, is in possession of your bond for 700*l.* ;—as I consider it fully discharged, it is but proper you should have this acknowledgment under my hand.

“ J. B.”

“Should my unostentatious friend,” Mr. Colman proceeds, “think me indelicate in publishing this anecdote, I can only say that it naturally appertains to the sketch I have given of our co-operations in life; and that the insertion of it here seems almost indispensable, in order to elucidate my previous statement, of our having blended so much sentiment with so much traffic. I feel, too, that it would be downright injustice to him if I suppressed it, and would betoken in myself the pride of those narrow-minded persons, who are ashamed of acknowledging how greatly they have profited by the liberal spirit of others. The bond above mentioned was given, be it observed, on a private account; not for money due to an actor for his professional assistance.”

Apprised of this transaction with respect to a bond, can any one wonder that honest Jack did not shine in Shylock? He was not a bit like

“The Jew
That Shakspeare drew.”

If Bannister's mind had been of a quality to evade doing an act of friendship on one side, because he had met with an unfortunate return on another, a circumstance which, just about the same period, took place with respect to Drury Lane, might have furnished a motive, and, could his conduct have been brought into question, would, with many, have been admitted as an apology. It will appear by the

following letter from Mr. Peake, the upright, intelligent, and indefatigable treasurer of the theatre.

“ Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square,
November 19th, 1808.

“SIR,

“ Mr. Sheridan’s trustees, Sir Robert Barclay, Peter Moore, and Richard Wilson, Esq. who have undertaken the entire settlement of his affairs, find that it will be a great assistance to the arrangements by them for that object, as well as material accommodation to Mr. Sheridan, if, for the present season, you will have the goodness to forego the instalments now and becoming due, and taken up by Mr. Graham, for the discharge of the loan you were so obliging as to assist in advancing for him in 1806.

“The great exertions which Mr. Sheridan made, two years since, in raising from his own private means near six thousand pounds, which he paid through me to the new Renters, without the assistance of a shilling from the theatre treasury, has been the cause of his trustees wishing for the above-stated indulgence.

“From the commencement of the ensuing season, Mr. Graham will proceed punctually in the discharge of your principal and interest ; in respect to the loan, he, a principal contributor to it, having himself readily agreed to the accommodation requested.

“The favour of an early line, addressed to me, either at the theatre treasury, or in Charlotte Street, will much oblige,

“Sir, your obedient servant,

“RICHARD PEAKE.”

About this time, I suppose,—for, thanks to the negligence of letter-writers, I cannot fix a date,—Bannister’s early studies turned to his pecuniary advantage. From Sir Joshua Reynolds’s sale at Christie’s, he had purchased for sixty guineas a picture, which his discernment taught him to know as a very fine original of that great master, and he sent it to be exhibited and disposed of at the rooms of Mr. Serres, in Lerner’s Street, called “The British School,” fixing its price at two hundred and fifty guineas. The Earl of Egremont, having seen the piece, offered two hundred, and Bannister immediately agreed to accept the sum, saying, that, although he was sure he had not asked too much, he would not be the means of causing this fine specimen of art to be excluded from the valuable collection of a nobleman so distinguished for his taste; and the picture was delivered.

Soon afterwards, Sir William Beechey was at Lord Egremont’s, and said, “Oh! I know that picture; it was Bannister’s; you gave two hundred and fifty guineas for it, and it is well worth the money.” The sequel will appear from the following letters.

which show, on the one hand, the noble spirit and dignified liberality of the peer, and, on the other, the justly tempered and honourable feeling of the gentleman; the one conferring a favour with grace, the other accepting it without unbecoming pride, or degrading meanness.

“Grosvenor Place, Friday.

“SIR,

“The more I look at Sir Joshua’s Madonna, the more I am convinced that it is one of the finest pictures that ever were painted, in any age, and well worth the price which Mr. Bannister first put upon it, and that he ought not to have abated, nor I to have asked for the abatement, of a single shilling; and I shall not have an easy conscience, unless he allows me to pay the remaining fifty guineas. I am going out of town this morning; but shall return on Sunday, and will call upon you the first opportunity to settle it.

“I am, Sir,

“Your very humble servant,

“EGREMONT.”

Addressed to J. T. Serres, Esq.

“DEAR SIR,

“I am much flattered to find that Sir Joshua’s excellence is fully equalled by his lordship’s liberality; and it will afford me no small degree of

pleasure to know, that the picture must increase in estimation by being in the possession of a nobleman of such acknowledged taste as the Earl of Egremont. Sir William Beechey and other eminent artists considered the picture worth the sum given in at the British School, yet I was extremely well satisfied with what I received from you. As I feel I ought not to decline his lordship's kind and generous offer, I beg you will endeavour to convey a due sense of my respect and gratitude on the present occasion.

“ I remain, dear Sir,

“ Very truly yours,

“ J. BANNISTER.”

“ Addressed to — Collingridge, Esq.

No. 7, King's Road.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

1808—1812.

Bannister's extensive tour with *The Budget* in 1808.—Plays and recites his *Budget* in 1809 at Glasgow and Manchester.—Robbed of money in Dublin.—Account of another robbery at his house in Gower Street.—Goes also to Arundel, Brighton, Bath, and other places.—His letter to his brother-in-law.—Makes a dangerous voyage to Dublin.—Letter to his sister.—Returns to London.—Letter of Colman about altering *The Budget*,—it is produced at Freemasons' tavern,—the London tavern,—and the Haymarket theatre.—Engaged for a short term at the Haymarket theatre.—*The Doubtful Son*, by Mr. Dimond;—Bannister in *Fabuletto*.—Goes to Southampton—to Bath, where he converts one of the songs in *The Budget* into an interlude.—Letter from Colman on his frequent change of place.—Progress of the rebuilding of Drury Lane,—Committee,—Observations on Mr. Whitbread and Mr. Sheridan.—Letters of Mr. Whitbread to Bannister on the subject of an engagement.

RETURN we now to *The Budget*. In 1808, Bannister made an unusually extensive tour, and his profits well repaid his exertions. Between the 12th of June, when he appeared at Colchester, and the latter end of September, when he played on the boards of the ill-fated Drury, he gave his entertainment at nearly seventy towns in various parts of England. In this list, omitting many in-

intermediate places, were included Ipswich, Norwich, Huntingdon, Bedford, Coventry, Derby, Newark, Sheffield, Leeds, York, Newcastle, Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Gloucester, Bath, Bristol, Salisbury, Southampton, Winchester, Portsmouth, Chichester, Brighton, Dover, Margate, Canterbury, Maidstone, and Deal. This enumeration shows the course of his progress. At all the places he visited he was received with equal applause, and all contributed amply to his emolument.

Nor was his activity in the following year less remarkable, or less productive. In consequence of business arrangements at Drury Lane, and of the catastrophe of that theatre, he was enabled, between the 24th of February and the latter end of March, to accomplish the undertakings adverted to in the following letter :

“ Glasgow, March 5th, 1809.

“ DEAR SWENDALL,

“ Elliston has written to me to play a few nights at Manchester. Be kind enough to say to him, as he writes from London, and desires me to address you on the subject, that I shall return to London after my engagement in Scotland, for the purpose of giving “ The Budget ” there before Passion week.

“ I was robbed in Dublin of 109*l.* in gold and twenty-five guineas in silver, stolen out of my bed-

room in a small portmanteau. I am glad to hear you go on so successfully. With love to Jane, believe me truly yours,

J. BANNISTER.

“P.S.—My man left a camlet fly, which I wear in the old man in ‘The Bold Stroke;’ pray direct it to London: the tailor will find it up in the wardrobe. I have a lawyer’s gown of Elliston’s, which shall be returned.

“Write me a few lines, by return of post, to the Star Hotel, Glasgow. I was laid up with gout eight days in Dublin. When I say ‘D—n the gout,’ do you say ‘*amen.*’ Make him pronounce *amen loud*, Jane!”

To be robbed, was not a new incident in the annals of Bannister. He was used to relate, with much pleasantry, an event which took place at his house in Gower Street. One morning when the breakfast table was set out, but he had not yet taken his farewell turn on the pillow, his servant came up, to say that a gentleman wanted to see him on particular business. “Tell him to leave his business.” The servant delivered that and several other messages, but always returned with answers, that the gentleman could not communicate with any other person; that he could not call another time; that the business was urgent—related to the theatre—required immediate attention. At length,

Bannister yielded, and his servant having assisted him to put on as many clothes as decency required, he repaired to the breakfast room. "Hey-day! the gentleman's gone—how odd!—Well, as I am up, I may as well have my tea;—but I do not see the silver tea-pot. How strange!—Where are the sugar tongs?—No teaspoons, I declare.—Who can have laid the breakfast-table?"—"Sir," said the servant, "the things were all here just now." The vanishing of the importunate gentleman, and the disappearance of the plate, were at once accounted for; he had taken advantage of the protracted absence of the servant on the last message, to retreat with his plunder; and to cover his retreat and his plunder, he took a great coat which was deposited in the hall. As the misfortune fell no heavier, it afforded an anecdote, and raised an occasional laugh for a long time.

In the course of his engagement in Scotland, a characteristic event occurred, which I shall detail in the words of his excellent and judicious friend Mr. Bartley.

"I was playing in Glasgow," he says, "and Mr. Bannister was performing a few nights at the Edinburgh theatre. After the engagement was over, he intended to give his Budget one night at the assembly-rooms, and wishing for a few days to intervene, he wrote me word he would come to Glas-

gow and act for my benefit, if I would promise to return to Edinburgh with him, and pass a couple of days, and hear his Budget, which I had then never done. The whole proposal was too gratifying to refuse, to say nothing of the advantage by his performance, which was very great, for he came gratuitously to serve one whom he had always called friend ; and I am proud to say, that from the day I was introduced to his notice by Mrs. Jordan to the hour of his death (a period of more than thirty years), I never saw him without a smile on his face, and an open hand to meet me. And I here record, that he carried his friendship for me beyond words. He acted Acres and Walter for my benefit. The house was crowded, and the next day I started with him for my two days' visit to Edinburgh. The following night he gave 'The Budget,' in the George's Street assembly-rooms, to a very elegant and numerous audience, not one of whom was more delighted than myself with the performance. When it was over, he said, 'Come, Mr. George, it is your turn to work now ; take the money from the door-keepers for me, and make up the account.' I did so, and the receipt was above ninety pounds, at which I expressed my dissatisfaction, and told him I thought there was more. 'Pooh, pooh !' said he, 'what the devil would you have ? If I am pleased, why should you not be ? Come along !' As we were going out,

we met another lot of men on the stairs, who said, ‘Gentlemen, won’t you take the account before you go?’ ‘We have the account and the money too, which is better,’ said Bannister. ‘We have not,’ said I: ‘let’s see your account, my fine fellows;’ and whispering to Bannister to hold his tongue, I returned to the table and asked the men where they had been placed. ‘At the carriage door,’ they answered; ‘you have had the money from the walking entrance.’ Bannister (who was as simple as a child upon matters of this kind) opened his eyes in amazement as he saw me count over this second supply. From this door I received upwards of sixty pounds more, so that the whole receipt exceeded a hundred and fifty pounds!—an enormous sum to be taken in a room. As we drove to the hotel, Bannister exclaimed, ‘By Jove, if you had not been with me, Mr. George, I don’t think I should have noticed what those fellows on the stairs said, I was so perfectly satisfied with the first accounts.’”

Of his remaining progress during this year, I am not able to give a detailed statement, but a letter which he wrote to his brother-in-law will afford an outline.

“Arundel, September 15th, 1809.

“DEAR SWENDALL,

“Mr. Brenton, I suppose, has informed you of my intention of playing at Brighton next Tuesday. Pray, get me a lodging for the time I shall be there,

which will scarcely exceed a week ; let it be as near the theatre as possible. Bond and my man are with me. I have been going on gloriously since I left London. You shall know particulars when we meet, till when, with my love to Jane, I am, believe me, yours truly,

J. BANNISTER.

“ Charles has been with me a week, and went to London this morning at six, for the Charter-house.”

It appears by this letter, and by another to the same relative, that Bannister's attention was not confined to “ The Budget,” but that he still pursued the regular walk of his profession. The letter from which I derive this information contains some details respecting his family, and strongly shows the goodness of his heart, and amiableness of his feelings.

“ Bath, No. 5, King Street, Queen Square.

“ DEAR SWENDALL,

“ Elliston has informed you, no doubt, that I am to be with him to perform from the 26th to the 29th. He proposes my taking “ The Beaux Stratagem” for my night ; by this, he means to perform in the piece himself, I suppose. We are to share the night (the remuneration for my services). Would not “ The Poor Gentleman,” or “ The Bold Stroke,” be better plays ? Think of something *strong*. I expect to be in Manchester on Sunday se’nnight :

perhaps I may come in the Birmingham mail. I suppose you have heard of poor Gelston's ship being taken by a French frigate; this has been a source of much sorrow to us all, but we must endure the rough as well as the smooth: he will, it is thought, be liberated, and he was well insured.

"John is at Spithead, and expects to sail as soon as refitted, with the expedition for the West Indies. Betsey is at Moscow. I shall leave Manchester for Dublin, where I am engaged for twelve nights. I do not like the sea at this time of year, but the interest of my family weighs more with me than any other consideration, and therefore to the ocean I shall trust myself. I am doing very well here—every box in the house is taken for my benefit on Tuesday, although the night has not been announced. Give my love to Jane, and, till we meet, believe me, dear Swendall, yours most truly and faithfully,

"J. BANNISTER.

"Remember me *kindly* to Elliston, and let him know, that "*Mr. John Bannister*" received his letter. Had my son been at Bath instead of Spithead, he would undoubtedly have opened the letter.

He played at Bath many of his favourite characters; Feignwell, Marplot, Sheva, Ollapod, Sylvester Daggerwood, Tristram Fickle, and Walter. For his benefit (19th December) he had "*She would*

and She would not," "The Son-in-Law," and "The Purse," playing, with great applause, Trappanti, Bowkitt, and Will Steady.

For a farewell, he gave at the rooms (22nd December) what he called his "Second Budget" for 1809.

In fulfilling his Dublin engagement, Bannister had encountered more danger than he had anticipated; that, and his reception and prospects, are pourtrayed in a letter to his sister Mrs. Swendall.

"Dublin, January 5, 1810.

"DEAR JANE,

"To relieve your nervous anxiety, I hasten to inform you that I am safe landed in Ireland, after a tedious and dangerous passage of thirty hours. In consequence of a dark pitch night, we got into three fathom water, and had we not fortunately got out to sea, the captain said we should have been upon the rocks. Twenty minutes after, we heard the signal guns of a large vessel which had run ashore. Next morning she was luckily saved, and towed into harbour, much damaged, with the loss of her rudder. In the fog, two vessels had passed us, at different times, within ten yards; had they struck us, we must have gone down! The captain said he had never made so dangerous a voyage. I am heartily sick of the sea, for I was really much alarmed, 'though no coward, Jane.' Thank God! who

enabled us to weather such tremendous gales ! I never wish to put to sea again, and hope I shall have no occasion after this engagement. Mr. Pole, the secretary (my friend), has already secured the Lord Lieutenant for my third night : thus far looks well ; starting well is half the battle. Let me hear what Mrs. Jordan is doing, and pray remember me most kindly to Elliston ; I really wish him well ; he is an unreserved, good-natured creature. I hope his old good luck may bring him through. I must conclude abruptly. Write immediately ; and with best regards to Swendall, believe me,

“ Yours affectionately,

J. B.”

Having established his fame and assured his emolument during his peregrinations, Bannister now (1810) tried the hazardous experiment of submitting his Budget to the critical taste of a London audience. Lent was the season fixed upon, and the aid of his old ally, George Colman, was invoked to enable him to “ dare again the field,” with prospects of advantage. His steady friend was not backward in answering his call, and his letter will show what he did and how readily.

“ Tuesday night, 22nd March 1810.

“ MY DEAR JACK,

“ I have been so ill and fevered to-day, that I could not finish the enclosed sooner. It will reach

you early to-morrow morning. In regard to the songs, I have done nothing,—not because I am ill or lazy, but because I really think I cannot do better by tinkering them. Taylor's song indeed I have altered in one instance, as far as relates to his 'whispering groan,' and I have cut out his prefatory stanzas, but to add a verse to it after he says, 'here ends the tale,' would be tedious and ridiculous superfluity. As to the 'Marvellous Physicians,' take my advice and try them once in London, as originally written. The Cockneys are not so squeamish as the Corydons, and if you make it delicate you lose all the fun. If objected to, it is objectionable in the bone, and should be laid aside altogether. All success attend you! I have no doubt of it. Truly yours, my dear Jack,

“ G. COLMAN.”

The song alluded to has been published in many collections, and also in Colman's *Reminiscences*, but I do not think it has sufficient merit to make me run the risk of adding to the displeasure which any “Cockney” or “Corydon” may have conceived in perusing any portion of these volumes. The song, as I am informed, had its origin in a story which Banister told, as from the recitation of his aunt. The author of *Broad Grins* was so struck with hearing it, that he immediately married it to immortal verse,

and sent the song to his friend. So it found a place in the *Budget*, and notwithstanding the fastidiousness of some squeamish Corydons, was generally well received.

The first town exhibition of “*The Budget*” was at the great room of the Freemasons’ Tavern, the spot where Sheridan and Henderson in former years delivered their admirable readings: he gratified the inhabitants of the city at the London Tavern, and finished his London Lent season at the Haymarket Theatre on the 14th of April. Profit and fame flowed profusely upon him. All criticism was in his favour, and the popular predilection exceeded his warmest hopes.

To the great satisfaction of the public it was announced that Bannister had accepted an engagement at the Haymarket for a month; it extended, in fact, to nearly two—from the 11th of June to the 23rd of July. He began with Colonel Feignwell and Walter, and in rapid succession played Job Thornberry, and Doctor Pangloss, Peeping Tom, Lenitive, Sylvester Daggerwood, Sir David Dunder, Sir Bashful Constant, and many other parts in which he had acquired reputation. The town received him with the joy which awaits the return of a meritorious favourite after an absence of five years; and when, after *La Gloire*, he performed the Squire, in “*Piety in Pattens*,” for his benefit, the

crowded state of the house and the hearty plaudits of the spectators showed the general good-will which prevailed in all parts.

During this engagement Mr. Dimond produced (3rd July) a play, so he termed it, in five acts, "The Doubtful Son," or "Secrets of a Palace." Of this piece it would be easy to speak, as to some parts, in terms of exalted encomium, in others of severe censure. Much interest is attached to an innocent and virtuous lady, who, yielding to imperative circumstances, has imposed on a noble and confiding husband the issue of her former marriage as his own son and heir. The selfish artifices of a malignant villain, who under the guise of devoted friendship and attachment increases the embarrassment of all parties, for the purpose of effecting the divorce of the lady and the ruin of the husband, are in the outline interesting, but, in the execution, sometimes gross, sometimes common-place. When having consummated his designs, even to the extent of obtaining a deed of gift of all the estate and property of his patron, he assumes the lordly villain, and commands the expulsion of his benefactor from his own palace, but is checked in his career, and doomed to the galleys or to death for crimes before undivulged, he is too like Tartuffe to afford means of congratulating the author on the depth or originality of his thought.

Fabuletto was the character assigned to Bannister. From the name it might be expected that he was distinguished by loquacity, and a little addicted to fibbing ; but, on the contrary, he was a reflecting, calculating, active, cautious, brave, and faithful adherent. By his sagacity and perseverance the acts of the villain were detected, and his punishment assured. His sentiments are always just and spirited ; his attachment immoveable ; love, to be sure, is out of the question, for he is married, and his means of effecting the catastrophe are debased to the level of pantomime, by the paltry trick of turning round a pillar-and-claw table for the purpose of exchanging two letters. The play was successful, and the author sent it into the reading world with his own favourable certificate,—“Sincerely speaking,” he says, “I believe it to be a good play ; but this declaration springs from my wish to be ingenuous, and not from any vanity.” Can any man doubt the source from which this declaration is drawn ? Not from vanity certainly !

After his Haymarket engagement, Bannister went to Southampton, where, in August, he was performing with Mrs. Siddons and Pope.

In November he returned to Bath, appearing (17th) in Sheva and Walter. He continued performing his accustomed characters—for he attempted nothing new—until the time of his benefit (4th De-

ember),—when a song in “The Budget,” called “The Club of Queer Fellows,” was converted into an interlude, and produced all that was intended, a hearty laugh. The other pieces were “The World” and “The Prize,” he playing Echo and Lenitive.

Bannister’s frequent change of place during this year produced a characteristic letter from his warm-hearted friend Colman.

“27th September 1811.

“MY DEAR JACK,

“Say Tuesday at two o’clock. I would appoint an earlier day, but my engagements do not permit me, for reasons which I will explain when I have the pleasure of seeing you. Do you never mean to stay a week again in a place? Jack Bannister should not become Jack-a-Lantern. Your very true and too stationary friend,

“G. COLMAN.”

When Bannister returned to town, the rebuilding of Drury Lane Theatre was in progress, but funds were not amply supplied. The committee for managing the undertaking, in which Mr. Whitbread took a leading part, was composed of men versed in business, regular and discerning. Sheridan, so much the reverse of all these, was banished, and in that respect it might have been supposed that the operations would be more prompt, and the public

confidence more ample than if he had interfered ; but, in character and in confidence there often is that which baffles sagacity and defies anticipation. There was in the gracious and winning manners of Sheridan something which animated hope in defiance of probability, and inspired confidence without the sanction of judgment. In trusting him, men were aware that they must catch an inspiration from his enthusiasm, and they sought it. In following out the plans of the more methodical committee, they became calculators, arithmeticians, accountants, and surveying the certainties of expenditure, while they considered the bare possibility of gain, they were never animated with a cheering spirit, or impelled by a vigorous feeling.

It naturally occurred to the committee, that it would be much to their interest that Bannister's name should appear in their list of performers, and Mr. Whitbread addressed to him the following:

“ SIR,

“ I hope you will excuse the liberty I take in writing to you, which I do in consequence of having heard from my friend, Mr. Dumergue, that it was your wish to form an engagement at the New Drury Lane Theatre, and that you were disposed to subscribe towards the building. With regard to the first there can be no possible doubt but that your

acknowledged talents will be so great an acquisition to any company which may be formed, as to make it impossible your wishes in that respect should not be accomplished; and with regard to the second, I should have very great gratification in receiving permission to add your name to our list of subscribers.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ SAMUEL WHITEREAD.”

“ Southill, Dec. 13th, 1811.”

I am not in possession of the precise terms in which this letter was answered, but, from the reply, it will appear, that Bannister consented to an engagement on his old terms, and proposed to subscribe toward the undertaking.

“ SIR,

“ I have submitted to the committee the wish expressed by you to form an engagement for the opening of the new Theatre, upon the terms upon which you were engaged at the late Theatre Drury Lane. Although the committee are not in a state at present to enter into any formal engagement, they nevertheless are so sensible of the advantage which must be derived to the subscribers from the acquisition of your great and acknowledged talents, to any company which may be formed, that they

have no hesitation in saying, you may look forward with certainty to the situation you wish to hold at the opening of the Theatre, and upon the terms you have named.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ SAMUEL WHITBREAD.”

“ Southill, Dec. 19th, 1811.”

It must strike the reader that there is in these epistles a stately stiffness, a sort of affected dignity and distance, which, if they pervaded all the correspondence and intercourse of the committee, were not likely to animate those who were well disposed toward them, or to conciliate those who were somewhat adverse.

An engagement was concluded, but it was not to take effect until the ensuing autumn. How he passed the summer I am not exactly informed. He was not at the Haymarket, and I find no memorandum of his public performance, except that he appeared one night at Bath (25th July,) in Colonel Feignwell.

CHAPTER XXVII.*

1812—1813.

Drury Lane New Theatre,—its company.—Advertisement for an opening address ; — numerous competitors ; — one written by Lord Byron is recited.—A collection of Poems called Rejected Addresses,—some account of it.—First performance.—Hamlet.—Bannister appears as Acres in *The Rivals* ; —he plays a month ; has the gout ; —his re-appearance.—*The Absent Apothecary*, an unsuccessful farce.—*Reconciliation*.—*The Russian*, by T. Sheridan.—Hyde Park in an uproar, or *The Don Cossack* in London.—Performance for the benefit of the British Prisoners in France.—Benefit to the Theatrical Fund,—its origin,—proposed to Garrick,—taken up by Hull,—who forms one for Covent Garden ; —Garrick establishes that of Drury Lane,—his ample benefactions and great exertions,—his last appearance on the stage given to the benefit of the Fund,—its prosperity for a time,—causes of its decline.—Feelings and exertions of Bannister,—actions commenced by him, Elliston, Barrymore, and Dowton, against the editor of a newspaper,—the damages given to the Fund.—Bannister's application to Mr. Whitbread,—a share in the theatre given to the Fund.—Bannister's applications to Mrs. Siddons to perform,—approved by Mr. Whitbread.—*Douglas* and *The Pannel*,—great produce.—Gratitude of the Masters of the Fund,—they constitute Bannister Grand Master.

DRURY LANE THEATRE being finished, at least sufficiently for the reception of an audience, Mr.

Raymond was appointed stage-manager, and the company collected. It displayed a fair portion of names of exalted excellence, and exhibited a reasonable promise of useful and agreeable exertions in all the walks of the drama. Proud pre-eminence in any department did not appear, but the portion of talent afforded was respectable, and, if good plays were supplied, capable of exciting interest and stimulating curiosity. Elliston, Downton, and other established favourites, appeared in the list of male performers; and Miss Smith, afterward Mrs. Bartley, and Miss Kelly, graced the list of ladies.

Mr. Whitbread, and the committee over which he presided, took a most extraordinary measure for procuring an opening address. They published on the 14th of August 1812, in the morning papers, an advertisement, which seemed to have been drawn from the precedent of some of their proposals to tradesmen or manufacturers to furnish wood-work, or brass-work, or lamp oil, or spermaceti candles for the grand undertaking. It was in these terms:

“REBUILDING OF DRURY LANE THEATRE.—The Committee are desirous of promoting a free and fair competition for an Address to be spoken upon the opening of the theatre, which will take place on the 10th of October next. They have therefore thought fit to announce to the public that they will

be glad to receive any such compositions, addressed to their Secretary at the Treasury Office, Drury Lane, on or before the 10th of September, sealed up with a distinguishing word, number, or motto on the cover, corresponding with the inscription on a separate sealed paper, containing the name of the author, which will not be opened unless containing the name of the successful candidate."

Had the Committee advertised in similar language for a comic ballad, or a drop scene, it is probable that no musician would have meditated a melody, no artist would have adjusted his palette, but the poets were less fastidious. The progress of the plan and its results are described with equal point and correctness in the *Quarterly Review*, a critical compilation of the highest learning, judgment, and spirit.

"The rebuilding of the theatre at Drury Lane, after its late destruction by fire, was managed by a certain committee, to whom also was confided, amidst other minor and mechanical arrangements, the care of procuring an occasional prologue. This committee, if it was well selected for its other duties, could not, we may well suppose, be greatly qualified for this; and accordingly with due modesty, and the true spirit of tradesmen, they advertised for the best poetical address to be sealed and de-

livered within a certain number of days, folded and directed in a given form, in short, like the tender for a public contract.

“ The result has been just what we should have expected from so auspicious a beginning in every respect but two ; one is, that to our great astonishment, three-and-forty persons were found to contend for this prize ; and the other, that amongst these are to be found two or three persons who appear to have some taste and genius.

“ The three-and-forty addresses, however, properly folded, sealed, marked, and directed, reached the committee. We can easily imagine the modest dismay with which they viewed their increasing hoards ; they began to think that it would have been easier and safer to trust to the reputation and taste of Mr. Scott or Mr. Southey, Mr. Campbell or Mr. Rogers, than to have pledged themselves to the task of making a choice and selection in a matter of which what little they knew was worse than nothing. The builders of the lofty pile were totally at a loss to know how to dispose of the builders of the lofty rhyme ; the latter all spoke different languages, and all, to the former, equally unintelligible. The committee were alike confounded with the number of addresses and their own debates. No such confusion of tongues had accompanied any erection since the building of Babel, nor could matters have been

set to rights unless by a miracle, if the convenient, though not very candid, plan of rejecting all the addresses had not occurred, as a 'mezzo-termine' in which the whole committee might safely agree, and the addresses were rejected accordingly. We do not think that they deserved, in true poetical justice, a better fate; not one was excellent, two or three only were tolerable, and the rest so execrable, that we wonder this committee of *taste* did not agree upon one of them. But as the several bards were induced to expend their precious time and more precious paper by the implied engagement on the part of the committee, that the best bidder should have the contract, we think they have a right to protest against the injustice of this wholesale rejection. It was about as fair as it would be in Messrs. Bish and Carter, after they had disposed of all their lottery-tickets, to acquaint the holders that there should be no drawing, but that they intended to transfer the £20,000 prize to an acquaintance of their own. The committee, we readily admit, made an absurd engagement, but surely they were bound to keep it.

"In the dilemma to which that learned body was reduced by the rejection of all the biddings, they put themselves under the care of Lord Byron, who prescribed in their case a composition which bears the honour of his name."

This composition is comprised in seventy-three

lines, for there is a triplet, not one of which rises above the level of tame mediocrity, although there are many quaint conceits and trivial puerilities, far below the expectations which must have been formed from the high renown and acknowledged genius of the writer. The first twelve lines will afford a sufficient specimen, and they who can relish Apollo sinking, Shakspeare deposed, radiance which mocks and adorns ruin, and Israel's pillar chasing night from heaven, may perhaps admire the rest.

“ In one dread night our city saw and sighed,
Bow to the dust the Drama's tower of pride ;
In one short hour beheld the blazing fane,
Apollo sink and Shakspeare cease to reign.
Ye who beheld, O ! sight admired and mourn'd,
Whose radiance mocked the ruin it adorn'd !
Through clouds of fire the massy fragments risen,
Like Israel's pillar chase the night from heaven,
Saw the long column of revolving flames
Shake its red shadow o'er the startled Thames,
While thousands, throng'd around the burning dome,
Shrank back appall'd and trembling for their home.”

Mr. Elliston repeated this address for the accustomed period of nine nights, and it was thought of no more.

But if the public were disappointed in any profuse display of poetic excellence from the advertisement in its natural course, they were largely overpaid in a production indirectly arising out of it.

Two brothers, wits, poets, and scholars, presented to the public in a small volume, called "Rejected Addresses," fanciful and humorous imitations of the style and manner of some of the favourite or highly pretending poets of the day. These essays, if they may fairly be termed burlesque, never descend to the meanness of mere verbal parody, or to the common grossness which affects to render sublime or tender thoughts ridiculous, by converting them into fustian or filth. These productions arrested the attention of the public, not merely as successful, although good-natured exposures of the writers to whom they were ascribed ; but as fine specimens of poetic genius in the authors. Every picture was shown upon their canvass in characteristic propriety, if in ludicrous attitude ; the best poets found their beauties rivalled while their faults were without malignity exposed, and the gentleman-like forbearance of the authors produced no sentiments but those of kindness in those who had been the subjects of their sport. Even Lord Byron, whose favourite production, "Childe Harold," was most whimsically and strikingly exposed, received the correction with great good-humour, and acknowledged the just exhibition of his moody muse in the line "For nought is everything, and everything is nought," by the quaint and characteristic exclamation, "That's a poser!"

In the preface to the eighteenth edition (published

in 1833), from which I have derived many of the facts already stated, the authors describe the feelings and conduct of several poets in terms equally honourable to all parties.

“To the credit of the *genus irritabile* be it recorded, that not one of those whom we had parodied or burlesqued ever betrayed the least soreness on the occasion, or refused to join in the laugh that we had occasioned. With most of them we subsequently formed acquaintanceship, while some others honoured us with an intimacy which still continues where it has not been severed by the rude hand of death. Alas! it is painful to reflect, that of the twelve writers whom we presumed to imitate, five are now no more, the list of the deceased being unhappily swelled by the most illustrious of all, the *clarum et venerabile nomen* of Sir Walter Scott! From that distinguished writer, whose transcendent talents were only to be equalled by his virtues and his amiability, we received favours and notice, both public and private, which it will be difficult to forget, because we had not the smallest claim upon his kindness. ‘I certainly must have written this myself,’ said that fine-tempered man to one of the authors, pointing to the description of the fire, ‘although I forget upon what occasion.’ Lydia White, a literary lady who was prone to feed the lions of the day, invited one of us to dinner, but recollecting afterwards that William Spencer formed one of the

party, wrote to the latter to put him off, telling him that a man was to be at her table whom he 'would not like to meet.'—'Pray, who is this whom I should not like to meet?' inquired the poet. 'O!' answered the lady, 'one of those men who have made that shameful attack upon you!' 'The very man upon earth I should like to know,' rejoined the lively and careless bard. The two individuals accordingly met, and have continued fast friends ever since. Lord Byron, too, wrote thus to Mr. Murray from Italy,—'Tell him, we forgive him were he twenty times our satirist.' "

It may not be amiss to notice in this place one criticism of a Leicestershire clergyman, which may be pronounced unique. "I do not see why they should have been rejected," observed the matter-of-fact annotator; "I think some of them very good!" Upon the whole, few have been the instances in the acrimonious history of literature, where a malicious pleasantry like the *Rejected Addresses*—which the parties ridiculed might well consider more annoying than a direct satire—instead of being met by querulous bitterness or petulant retaliation, has procured for its authors the acquaintance, or conciliated the good-will of those whom they had the most audaciously burlesqued.

If it were necessary, in speaking of such a work, to deduct from the general praise to which it is

entitled, I should say that the prose essays might have been omitted. The Morning Post is well done, but the daily press is too fugitive from memory for the delineation of its peculiarities; Cobbett was not worthy of the company into which he was introduced; whatever effect it may have produced in its day, his ruffianly style cannot descend with credit to posterity; and Dr. Johnson has never been successfully burlesqued. It is easy to frame sentences of apparently elaborate structure, but which, in reality, are composed only of huge words misapplied; but few, very few indeed, have ever had the skill to use terms, either recondite or familiar, with such precision, that every one presents or heightens an idea, and that no one can be displaced without injury to the whole. Any writer, however clumsy and witless, can translate Brewer's widow into "*Cervisian coctor's viduate dame*;" but it is difficult to suppose that any man, who could write the words, could fancy he was imitating Johnson. If these observations should be allowed their full weight, they detract but little from the general merits of the work; and so long as good taste shall retain any sway among us, the "Rejected Addresses" will be perused, and re-perused with unceasing satisfaction, and cited to the honour of their elegantly minded authors, James and Horace Smith.

On the 10th of October 1812, the new house

opened with "Hamlet" and "The Devil to Pay." On the 15th, Bannister, after an absence of three years, made his appearance as Acres in "The Rivals," and was received with warm and general applause, most gratifying to his feelings and cheering to his friends. During a month he performed a few of his favourite parts, Touchstone, Scrub, Lisardo, and Duretete, when, after playing the Copper Captain (17th November), his career was arrested by his old enemy the gout, at whose stern command he was compelled to remain in medical durance upward of ten weeks.

His re-appearance (5th February 1813) in Trap-panti was again cheered with the accustomed welcome. A new afterpiece was speedily produced (10th) with a most captivating title to the ears of an invalid, "The Absent Apothecary;" but the town seemed to partake in the feelings of the player, for after a second appearance, the son of Galen was doomed to permanent absence. What Bannister was denominated, I know not; but the whole composition was deemed "stuff," and the author's prescription, "repetatur haustus," utterly rejected.

For the benefit of Dowton (26th April) Bannister performed Grog, in "Reconciliation; or, The Birth Day," translated from Kotzebue by T. Dibdin, and now reduced into one act. The author says, in his "Reminiscences," that it was several times very suc-

cessfully acted through the powerful aid of Bannister and Dowton.

“The Russian,” a melodrama, said to have been written by Mr. T. Sheridan, (13th March,) was well received, and performed fourteen nights. Bannister played a principal character, but, as it was never published, I am unable to state its merits.

Recent events on the Continent had given fame to the Russian armies, and made the Cossacks objects of public interest and curiosity. To avail themselves of this whim, Knight and Payne brought out for their benefit (17th June) a dramatic sketch in one act, “Hyde Park in an uproar ; or, the Don Cossack in London.” It was supported by Bannister, Lovegrove, and Knight. Had its merits been greater than they were, the advanced state of the season would have prevented its frequent repetition ; but the public acquiesced, without a murmur, in the retreat of the Don Cossack, never inquiring where he took refuge.

Two benefits, given for charitable purposes, distinguished this season. The last in order, but first to be mentioned, because it interferes little with the life of Bannister, was a performance on an extra night, after the regular season had terminated, (6th July,) for the British prisoners in France. In 1803, upon the rupture of the treaty of Amiens, in violation of the long established law and courtesy of

nations, and of his own express assurances, Bonaparte had caused all English persons resident in France to be arrested and detained as prisoners of war. Thus were numerous individuals severed from their families and their affairs, their pursuits interrupted, and their hopes blasted, without any advantage to their oppressor, except the gratification of a diabolical delight that he felt in inflicting misery on any subject of the English crown. They were removed to different towns in France, and kept in a state of strict detention. Some, who were masters of independent property, or who had wealthy friends, could subsist on the remittances they received; but others, who, in the outset of life, and without financial resources, had sought amusement or instruction in a visit to France, were subjected to great privations, often to extreme difficulties. Toward those the hand of British benevolence was freely extended, and a very productive benefit at Drury Lane, assisted in rendering the patriotic, benevolence copious and effective.

Another benefit night (22nd June) was devoted to the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund. Davies, in his *Life of Garrick*, has given a clear and judicious detail of the origin and progress of this truly laudable institution. The establishment, it seems, had been proposed to Mr. Garrick and Mr. Lacy, but, from some of those impediments to which such projects

are continually subject, it remained a mere proposal, until Garrick went to Italy. During his absence, that virtuous and excellent man, Mr. Hull, took up the plan, and by his care it was matured, and the Covent Garden Fund was formed.

On his return to England, Garrick was hurt to find that a system which, for every reason, ought to have owed its existence, and, perhaps, its name to him, had derived its being from another. Still his displeasure did not render him splenetic, or even indifferent. Anxious for the welfare of the meritorious band of which he was the leader, he became the founder and patron of the Drury Lane fund. His speed and earnestness in the race of benevolence may have been stimulated by the recollection that he had not started so early as he might ; but his donations were ample, and his exertions hearty. Among other gifts he conferred on the committee of the fund a house in Drury Lane, for the purpose of transacting their affairs ; and some other houses appear to have been bestowed with it. These he afterwards repurchased for three hundred and seventy pounds, and by his will bequeathed them for the benefit of the fund. In 1776, a bill was brought into parliament to give permanence and a corporate character to the trustees of this laudable charity ; and Garrick defrayed, from his own purse, all the expenses of obtaining the Act. Beside this,

he performed annually a play for their benefit. In the last season of his appearance, beside the customary benefit, which took place on the 30th of May, when he played Hamlet for the last time, he dedicated the night of his valedictory performance, the 10th of June, to their emolument. He personated Don Felix, in "The Wonder;" and spoke a prologue written by himself, and usually recited on such occasions: it was a happy composition, appealing to the benevolence of the public in a proper tone, equally remote from clamorous sauciness and abject whining; full of good-humoured allusions, without any attempt at burlesque or ridicule. After a few introductory verses, he said,

"Shall the great heroes of celestial line,
Who drank full bowls of Greek and Roman wine,
Cæsar and Brutus, Agamemnon, Hector,
Nay, Jove himself, who here has quaff'd his nectar!
Shall they who govern'd Fortune cringe and court her,
Thirst in their age and call in vain for porter?
Like Belisarius, tax the pitying street
With 'date obolum' to all they meet?
Shan't I, who oft have drench'd my hands in gore,
Stabb'd many, poison'd some, beheaded more,
Who numbers slew in battle on this plain,
Shan't I, the slayer, try to feed the slain?
Brother to all, with equal love I view
The men who slew me, and the men I slew;
I must, I will this happy project seize,
That those too old and weak may live at ease.
Suppose the babes I smother'd in the Tower
By chance or sickness lose their acting power,

Shall they, once princes, worse than all be serv'd ?
In childhood murder'd, and when murder'd starv'd !
Matrons half ravish'd for your recreation,
In age should never want some consolation.
Am I, young Hamlet once, to nature lost,
Behold, O ! horrible ! my father's ghost
With grizzly beard, pale cheek, stalk up and down,
And he, the Royal Dane, want half a crown ?
Forbid it ladies — gentlemen, forbid it !
Give joy to age, and let them say—you did it.

To you, ye gods, I make my last appeal—
You have a right to judge as well as feel ;
Will your high wisdom to our scheme incline,
That kings, queens, heroes, fools, and ghosts may dine ?
Olympus shakes !——that omen all secures,
May ev'ry joy you give be tenfold yours."

Davies says, that, by the product of his labours in acting annually capital parts, and by donations of one kind or other, he gained for this beneficial institution a capital of nearly four thousand five hundred pounds.

For many years after the retreat of Garrick, the fund continued in prosperity ; but of late that condition was reversed, and the pensioners were reduced to a stipend diminished by one-fifth of the original grant. For this change many causes may be assigned, but probably that most operative was the distress of the treasury, and the consequent irregular payment of the performers. A principal source of revenue arose from a voluntary assessment, which the subscribers made on themselves, of sixpence in

the pound on their salaries. While these were punctually paid, the deduction would be cheerfully submitted to, and little felt. He who received three pounds on a Saturday, would not feel pain at parting with eighteen pence; and he whose salary rose to fifteen would little regret a deduction of three half-crowns: but when the payments were deferred for many weeks, perhaps to the end of the season, and then made only in part, the disappointed creditor of the treasury, involved perhaps in debt to the full amount of his demand, and far beyond that of his receipt, would be very much inclined to postpone his contribution until he should receive his arrears in full. Thus would a languor be introduced, which is ever fatal to an undertaking formed for purposes of benevolence and mutual aid.

Bannister, ever anxious for the honour and welfare of the body to which he belonged, felt with great acuteness the depressed condition of the fund, and with generous sympathy commiserated the case of those who, without any demerit of their own, must be grievous sufferers. That he was removed by prudence and by good fortune far from the probability of wanting the fund as a resource for himself or his family, quickened, instead of blunting, his manly feelings. His own contribution was never, at any period of his life, intermitted; and he was urgent with all his dramatic brethren, those espe-

cially who were in the receipt of the largest emoluments, to contribute and continue their aid to this meritorious undertaking.

On the death of Moody, in 1811, the committee for managing the fund nominated him Master ; but a few years before this period, in 1806, he had the pleasure, in conjunction with Mr. Elliston, Mr. Barrymore, and Mr. Dowton, of adding a sum of fifty pounds to their regular donations. A play which had been advertised, was, for some reason, postponed. The theatrical reporter of one of the daily papers, fancying perhaps that he could compose criticisms, as some men write travels, without stirring from his own fire-side, prepared a copious and laboured account of a performance which had never taken place. What had soured the gentleman's temper cannot be known ; but when his critical reverie was published, it was found to be so unjust, so bitter, nay, it was even said so scurrilous, that the four players were advised to commence legal proceedings for the libel against the proprietors of the paper ; and Mr. Editor purchased peace by a payment of fifty pounds, which were immediately handed over to the treasurer of the fund.

On the completion of the new theatre, Bannister became solicitous, I might almost say importunate, to Mr. Whitbread, for the extension of contributions,

and the appointment of a benefit night. In answer to the first application, the president of the committee of management dedicated to the fund a share in the theatre, the nominal price of which was one hundred pounds ; its real value is not so easily to be defined.

For the obtaining of a benefit, Bannister was indefatigable ; such an experiment had not been made for sixteen years. In his great anxiety, he wished to procure the aid of the highest talents in both departments of the drama. Mrs. Siddons, of course, presented herself to his mind, and he requested the permission of the committee to solicit her aid. Mr. Whitbread wrote in answer :

“ SIR,

“ The sub-committee quite approve the application to Mrs. Siddons, and the mode.

“ Will you be pleased, at the time you deliver *your* letter to Mrs. Siddons, to present to her the one which I enclose, written by order of the sub-committee in support of your application, which, we sincerely hope, will be successful.

“ We presume that you and Mr. Dowton, or some other efficient member of the fund, will attend Mrs. Siddons upon the occasion ; and you will probably, before you go to her, inform yourselves, by commu-

nication with Mr. Arnold, what plays it will be possible to propose for the occasion.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ SAMUEL WHITBREAD.”

“ Drury Lane Theatre, 1st May 1813.”

On the 22nd of June, the benefit took place. The pieces were “ Douglas,” in which Mrs. Siddons played Lady Randolph, and “ The Pannel,” which Mrs. Jordan enlivened by her performance of Beatrice. The produce was beyond all hope ; it was a clear sum of nine hundred and eighty-three pounds.

Sensible how much they owed to his benevolent and effectual exertions, the Masters of the Fund, while the arrangements so beneficially concluded were yet in progress, forwarded to Bannister the following diploma, beautifully written, and authenticated by their corporate seal.

“ London, 14th November 1812.

“ This small Testimony of Gratitude and Affection is presented by the Committee for managing the affairs of the Fund established and incorporated at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, to their dear Friend and Brother,

JOHN BANNISTER, ESQ.

To prove the high opinion they entertain of the unbounded

CHARITY, ASSIDUITY, AND HUMANITY

He has so frequently shown in promoting and conducting the said establishment, and to declare the said John Bannister, Esq. formally and unanimously elected

MASTER OF THE SAID CORPORATION;

And he is hereby empowered to call together, when and as often as it shall to him seem necessary, the said Committee, and at every meeting so called to preside and direct. In token whereof, the said Committee have set their hands, and the sign and seal of the Corporation.

ROBERT PALMER,
WM. DOWTON,
V. DE CAMP,
JOHN POWELL,
CHARLES DIGNUM,

WILLIAM PENLEY,
EDWARD WRIGHT,
GEORGE CHARLES CARR,
BENJN. EVANS,
HUGH SPARKS,
W. MADDOX, Secretary."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1813—1814—1815.

Bannister unemployed during the summer.—Drury Lane,—Mr. Stephen Kemble,—Munden,—Kean,—Godolphin, the Lion of the North.—Bannister plays Nimble,—John Dory,—and the first grave-digger in Hamlet.—Criticism of a scene-shifter.—His benefit.—Surrender of Calais.—Representations of Garrick,—Substituted for Dibdin's translation of Garrick and his *Double*. The Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia in London,—how received.—Bannister goes to Paris.—Denon's opinion of him.—His return.—Last season of his performing.—Frequent appearance of Mr. Kean.—Bannister plays Sam Squib, in *Past Ten o'Clock*.—Miss Mellon and Wroughton quite the stage.—Death of Mr. Whitbread.—Bannister's last benefit.—Letters from Mrs. Jordan.—The Marchioness of Headfort.—Lady Bessborough.—Mrs. Coutts, late Miss Mellon,—her judicious liberality.—He plays Echo, and Walter,—his farewell address.—Anecdote by Dibdin.—Observations on Bannister's theatrical life.—His extreme regularity in the performance of his duty.—His powers in tragedy, comedy, and in serio-comic parts.—The freedom of the theatre presented to him and his family.

IN the ensuing summer, Bannister did not present himself before the public; he neither joined any provincial corps, nor recited his Budget.

At the opening of Drury Lane, in September 1813, he was at his post, and performed most of his

favourite characters ; but he did not appear in many that were original. The committee, sensible that their last season had not been productive either in money or popularity, obtained new assistants. Mr. Stephen Kemble, soon after the commencement, played Falstaff a few nights ; Munden joined the company, and in many pieces he and Bannister afforded powerful support to each other ; but the great and effectual operation was the engagement of Mr. Kean. This gentleman had already distinguished himself at some of the provincial theatres, and was announced as coming from Exeter.

Never, not even in the case of Mrs. Siddons, was the public voice more clearly or energetically pronounced. His first display (26th January 1814) was in Shylock ; his next character was Richard the Third ; and so powerful was the impression he made, that, after his third performance, orders were interdicted, and those to whom free admissions had been granted, were requested not to use them on the nights when his name was announced. From his first appearance to the close of the season (16th July) Mr. Kean played sixty-eight nights ; that is, Shylock, fifteen ; Richard, twenty-five ; Othello, ten ; Hamlet, eight ; Iago, eight ; and Luke, in " Riches," four.

Mr. Kean's attraction replenished the treasury, and left the managers little occasion to rely on the

success of new pieces. Several were nevertheless produced, with different degrees of favour, but in none of them was Bannister very prominent. Early in the season (6th October) he had a character in "Godolphin, the Lion of the North," an opera written by Mr. Thompson, who had translated "The Stranger," and many other dramas from the German. It was played only three nights, and not printed.

This was his only part in a new play ; but in supporting pieces in which other performers were to appear, he took several which were new to him, such as Nimble in "Crotchet Lodge," and John Dory in "Wild Oats ;" and (to what base uses we may return !) when Mr. Kean (12th March) played Hamlet, Bannister, who had rescued the play from Garrick's Gallic mutilations, who had performed Denmark's prince on so many occasions, now burrowed under ground like a mole, and appeared only as goodman delver, the first grave-digger. He moralized no more on the skull of Yorick, but "jowled it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder," that it might form a theme for Kean ; and the unmeasured gullet which used to drink up Esil, was now reduced to a simple petition for a stoup of liquor.

Yet a man has always an opportunity of learning something. As he stood one night unobserved, a small coterie of scene-shifters were discussing the per-

formers of Hamlet ; one admired Henderson, another Kemble, and each commented on his favourite. At last, one of them said, “ You may talk of Henderson and Kemble, but Bannister’s Hamlet for me ; for he has always done twenty minutes sooner than anybody else !”

For his benefit (30th May) he took “ The Surrender of Calais,” to which he added the description of his first interview with Garrick, the manner of Roscius in private conversation, and an imitation of him in Lusignan. This exhibition, I presume, was substituted for a piece which T. Dibdin had prepared, and of which, in his very entertaining *Reminiscences*, he gives this account.

“ Some years prior to this Mr. Bannister had requested me to write a farce for his benefit at Drury Lane, from a French *Vaudeville* performing at Paris, as “ Garrick and his Double,” and founded on an incident supposed to have taken place at Litchfield, the native town of my great god-father, who, on going to perform there after his brilliant success in London, finds himself impudently anticipated by an impostor, whose usurpation of Garrick’s name and character very nearly procures the genuine Roscius the honour of a horse-pond and an ignominious expulsion from the land of his infancy. As it was not the most judicious plan of the French author to lay the scene in a place

where Garrick's identity could be so easily proved, I took the liberty to transfer the field of action to a distant part of the kingdom, as well as to endeavour the addition of some little characteristic *traits* I had gathered respecting the hero of the British stage, whose character and manners the Parisian author imagines he has invested with complete English *vraisemblance*, by making him on his *entrée* to the inn call for *ros-biff* ! biff-stek ! ponch ! When the farce was finished, Mr. Bannister, though he much approved it, began to apprehend it would be deemed too great an instance of presumption in any actor to represent the former autocrat of Drury Lane and the drama : the part of the impostor he meant to play himself, but no one being found sufficiently hardy to aspire to present the portrait of little Davy, the farce lay fifteen or sixteen years in my bureau, till it saw the light at Sadler's Wells, for my benefit, on the 10th of October, when both Garrick and the Impostor were so well acted by Messrs. Campbell and Williams, that it became a very favourite stock-piece."

In this season too, it should be recollected, the military successes of the allies on the Continent, enabled the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia, with their most distinguished military commanders, to visit the British capital. The enthusiastic joy which everywhere hailed their appearance, was com-

mensurate to the sense entertained of the deliverance of Europe from a bloody and unmitigated tyranny, from the ravages of the plunderer and the yoke of the oppressor. The people of England, although proudly conscious of their own safety, were deeply sensible of the woes experienced in other countries. They had, beside, to rejoice in the apparent termination of a protracted and expensive war ; their demonstrations of satisfaction were unbounded ; illuminations gladdened the metropolis ; the parks exhibited a fair, and splendid fire-works ; and when the monarchs, the Hettman Platoff, General Blucher, and, above all, our own immortal Duke of Wellington, appeared in public, gratitude and exultation assumed their most cheering and flattering display. The theatres, of course, had the benefit of these public feelings ; and when the sovereigns and the generals honoured them with their presence, immense audiences were always assembled, as if proud of being sheltered under the same roof with their august allies and their valiant and successful commanders.

During the recess Bannister availed himself of the opportunity, the first which Englishmen had enjoyed for more than twenty years, (the treacherous truce, called the Peace of Amiens, excepted,) of visiting France. His party were Mr. Neild, the eminent solicitor ; Mr. Heath, the celebrated en-

graver ; and the well-tempered and warm-hearted Mic Kelly, from whose narrative all my knowledge on the subject is derived.

Kelly tells us that none of the party, except himself, could speak French. This is not quite correct : Bannister, although not fluent in the language, had enough of it to obtain what he wanted, and to avoid the gross errors of the boarding-school. If he required a servant, he would not exclaim “ *sonnez la cloche ;*” or if he was a little hoarse, he would not say, “ *j’ai attrapé un froid.*” Yet, compared with the facility of Kelly, his little power of explanation would pass for nothing, and undoubtedly honest Mic was no less willing than able to be the only medium of communication.

In describing their route, Kelly affords some entertaining anecdotes, and shows himself in strong colours of sportive eccentricity ; first, as bearing a vocal part with a musical coachman ; next, as rivaling a ballad-singer at Beauvais with such effect, that he not only gained the applause of the street-audience, but a proposal from his landlady, that if he would remain and sing to her guests in the coffee-room, he should be rewarded with bed and board.

This liberal offer being ungratefully refused, the travellers pursued their way to the capital, and found themselves accommodated in a very good abode in the Boulevard du Temple, provided for

them by the elder Vestris. "We passed a delightful time," Kelly observes, "while we remained in Paris." How could it be otherwise, with the urbanity of Mr. Neild, the placid temper of Mr. Heath, the never-ceasing good-nature of Kelly, and the buoyant vivacity of Bannister?

One piece which they saw at the Vaudeville is mentioned with great approbation; it is called "*La Route à Paris*," in which Bannister spoke with strong applause of Joly, who played a gouty English lord: his praise was of high value, for no man could be a better judge of athritic torture or of dramatic simulation. I had personally a slight opportunity of making this observation. Overtaking him one day hobbling near the British Museum, I tapped him on the shoulder, saying, "My dear Jack, how well you play the gouty man?" "Ah, my dear friend," he answered, "I am sorry I perform it so much to the life;" but immediately relapsing into good humour, he introduced me to a young boy, his grandson Eicke, who was walking by his side, and entered into a sportive conversation, as if he only knew pain to give a gust to his feeling, and animation to his expression of pleasure.

Mr. Heath introduced them to the house of Denon, one of the *savans* who had accompanied Bonaparte to Egypt, and who, on account of his excellent and extensive collection, and his admirable

science in its component parts, was the acknowledged head of *virtù* in Paris. Bannister was presented to him as a most eminent theatrical performer, of which Denon said he had no doubt, for he had a fine stage face and the eye of a good comedian. Before any deduction is made from this opinion on the score of French politeness, it should be recollected that the person who pronounced it was an exquisite judge and accurate observer; and that French blandishment, especially from the adherents of Napoleon, was not at that time lavished on the English.

After viewing everything that was curious and interesting in and about Paris, Bannister departed with Mr. Heath, both having duties to fulfil in London.

We come now to the last season of Bannister's theatrical life; and far from feeling satisfaction at having nearly accomplished an anxious task, I am sensible only of regret at bidding adieu, in his public capacity, to an old and cherished friend, whose talents had afforded me such frequent and unbounded satisfaction, whose person, features, gestures, voice, and manner are indelibly fixed in my memory.

To Bannister this season was remarkably unimportant. Tragedy engaged the attention of the town. Kean's attractions were rivalled by the per-

formance at Covent Garden of the young, beautiful, pathetic, and accomplished Miss O'Neill. Yet the Drury Lane champion stoutly maintained the conflict; for, out of about two hundred and forty nights which constitute the acting season, he played on one hundred and twenty. On these occasions Bannister might appear in the after-pieces, but in the cast of the tragedies there was no space for him. Besides, Elliston, Munden, Mr. and Mrs. Bartley, Miss Kelly, and several other performers, serious and comic, were all pressing their claims to notice.

Having introduced the name of that celebrated performer Kean, candour requires that I should state Bannister's judgment on his merits, which I derive from memorandums to which I have already confessed my obligations, written by the author of "Wine and Walnuts." "Standing at the first floor window," he says, "of a house in Cecil Street, in the Strand, nearly opposite the residence of Mr. Kean the tragedian, and seeing him and the late Mr. Whitbread go out from the street-door arm-in-arm, Bannister observed, 'How grateful to Providence that young man ought to be for his sudden elevation, when contrasted with what he has experienced.' I asked Bannister what he thought of Kean, as an actor, particularly as to the manner of his playing Richard the Third, in comparison with the performance of the same character by Garrick,

asking at the same time whether he could recollect Garrick's Richard. He answered, ' Yes, very distinctly. For some time,' he said, ' I could not form a judgment, and yet was unable to account for it : I had only seen Kean from behind the scenes, so one night I seated myself rather beyond the centre of the pit, and there he appeared to me another man. You think this strange, but it is true. In this new, and as I suppose proper, station, I seemed at once to discover his merits, which grew upon my imagination, first to approbation of his powers, and ended in surprise and admiration ! Indeed I found his conception of the character so entirely original and so excellent, that I almost forgot my old master Davy Garrick.' "

Taking, then, half the season for Mr. Kean, and a moderate portion for each of the others, little remained for Bannister ; yet he appeared with his accustomed talent and success in many of his favourite characters, particularly in the Copper Captain, Touchstone, John Dory, Sir David Dunder, Storm, Jack Junk, and Lenitive.

Only one original part he performed ; it was in a farce by Dibdin, called " Past ten o'clock, and a rainy night." His character was that of Sam Squib, an old soldier, which by contrast supported that of Dozey, an old sailor personated by Munden. It were useless to detail the plot, or rather to enumer-

ate the merry, but not very novel incidents of this piece ; they consisted in suitors in disguise intruding into a house, young ladies in disguise escaping out of it, servants astonished, an old guardian angry, and two pair of lovers united. It was completely successful, being performed nearly thirty times.

Two esteemed performers also departed from Drury Lane in the course of the year ; Miss Mellon, deservedly called to a much more exalted destiny, played Audrey for her final benefit on the 7th of April ; Bannister was Touchstone. At the end of the season, Wroughton, yielding to the peremptory dictates of age and infirmity, quitted a profession in which he had always appeared with credit to himself, and to the satisfaction of the public. If his general ability was not of the highest class, still there were parts in which he could not be excelled, hardly equalled. Of Darlemont I have already spoken, and I may add to the list of his excellences Master Ford, Sir John Restless, and Sir George Touchwood.

One dismal and unforeseen event occasioned the shutting of the theatre for a night ; the sudden and unexpected death of Mr. Whitbread, accelerated, as it was generally believed, by the great labour and anxiety of mind which he underwent in performing his duties in the committee of management.

At length Bannister's final benefit approached. It was fixed for the first of June. In anticipation of

this event, he received many gratifying testimonials, although one was not unmixed with disappointment. He had solicited and depended on the aid of his natural ally in the field of comedy, Mrs. Jordan ; but she wrote him a letter, in which whatever of bitter there might be in his failure to obtain the boon he requested, was amply compensated by the warmth and undoubted sincerity of the kindness which accompanied the refusal.

“ May the 3rd.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ Your letter came at the time Sir Gilbert Blane, my physician, was with me, or I would not have sent your servant away without an answer, for it was my intention to have written to you at all events this evening.

I am very ill, and in the sincerity of my good wishes, request you to give up all thoughts of me. My health is in so very precarious a state that I have not been two days together out of my own room since my return home : so situated, I have been obliged to refuse many applications, including one *very pressing one* from the Caledonian Society. I have been obliged to give up one of considerable advantage, that was to have commenced at this very time, and I have too much reason to fear that I shall be under the necessity of forfeiting one still

more so ; that, too, was to have begun at the end of this month, and to have concluded the middle of June. You perceive how unfortunately I am situated, for if I should be well enough to play on the 1st of *June* in London, I should be able to fulfil my engagements in the country ; and if *not*, the consequence would be that I must disappoint you. Added to this, my friend and medical adviser is very anxious that I should give up every idea of playing this summer, and, as soon as I am able, to repair to the sea-side, from which I felt much relief last year. Do me the justice to believe, that, independent of my own sufferings, it is a real mortification to me to be deprived of the—what shall I say, pleasure or pain?—of witnessing the last exertions of one of the most *genuine* performers of the age. May every happiness attend you !

“ Yours sincerely,

“ DORA JORDAN.”

From two ladies of exalted rank he received the following :

“ The Marchioness of Headfort’s compliments to Mr. Bannister, and requests he will be so good as to secure for her one of the stage-boxes for his night, Thursday, the 1st of June. It is with much regret she sees it is his last appearance on the stage.

“ West End, May 13th 1815.”

“Lady Bessborough presents her compliments to Mr. Bannister, and begs he will be so good as to send her ten tickets for his night, and also, if possible, to secure four places anywhere up stairs for Mrs. Peterson and her other maids, and two, either in the front or side boxes, for her sons. Lady B. would have written sooner, but mistook the day.

“Monday.”

From the lady who two months before took her farewell benefit as Miss Mellon, but was now in the enjoyment of unbounded affluence as the wife of Mr. Coutts, the banker, he received the following sprightly and good-humoured note :

“DEAR BANNISTER,

“Twenty years we have been fellow-servants together in Drury Lane Theatre. May your retirement from labour be as happy as I wish ! I feel assured none rejoiced more sincerely than yourself at the happy and honourable *exit* I have made from *my* professional service.

“Yours truly,

“Audrey,

(The last part I acted with you,)

“HARRIET COUTTS.”

As an inclosure, Mrs. Coutts sent precisely what

good sense and right feeling would direct: not the mere price of a few box tickets, not the donation which would be offered to solace a retiring pauper, but that which might have been converted into an elegant and ornamental *souvenir*,—it was a ten-pound note. That good taste and a proper feeling limited her donation, may be clearly inferred from the fact, that in the previous year, while she was unmarried, she sent to a performer less prosperous than Bannister five pounds for a gallery ticket at his benefit, with a mock-solemn request that he would have a place kept for her; but in the present year she forwarded to him twenty-five pounds.

On the night in which Bannister was to vanish from that sky in which he had shown so brilliantly nearly forty years, Kenny's comedy of "The World," was the first, and "The Children in the Wood," the after-piece. Echo had, ever since it was produced, been an effective character in the hands of Bannister; and of Walter, a being of his own creation, a part in which he never had a rival, it is unnecessary to speak: he performed it on this night as well as he had on that of its first production.

At the conclusion, in a firm voice, although somewhat ruffled by emotion, and in a manly but yet respectful manner, he addressed the audience in these terms:

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

“Seven-and-thirty years have elapsed since I appeared before you, my kind benefactors ; and I feel that this instant of separation is much more awful to me than the youthful moment when I first threw myself upon your indulgence.

“During my strenuous exertions to obtain your favour, how much have those exertions been stimulated and rewarded by the public ? And one vanity of my heart, which it will ever be impossible for me to suppress, must be the constant recollection of days in which you fostered me in my boyhood, encouraged me progressively on the stage, and after a long and continued series of service thus cheer me at the conclusion of my professional labours.

“Considerations of health warn me to retire : your patronage has given me the means of retiring with comfort.—What thanks can I sufficiently return for that comfort which you have enabled me to obtain ?

“This moment of quitting you nearly overcomes me : at a time when respect and gratitude call upon me to express my feelings with more eloquence than I could ever boast, those very feelings deprive me of half the humble powers I may possess upon ordinary occasions.

“Farewell ! my kind, my dear benefactors.”

When he had thus spoken, he bowed respectfully to the audience, and was led off by all the performers of the theatre, who attended to witness his farewell. No performer, Kelly observes, and all other writers agree with him, ever quitted the stage more deservedly respected and regretted !

Tom Dibdin, who officiated as prompter on the occasion, relates an anecdote, which, for its whim, is worthy to be preserved. “ At the conclusion,” he says, “ Mr. Bannister made me a present of his own book, from which I had prompted as a *souvenir*, on which I wrote, or rather made, the following *impromptu*

In early age,
To tread the stage
Jack would have given the world (receive it
As genuine truth) :
When past his youth
He gladly gave “ The World ” to leave it.

Such was the termination of Bannister’s theatrical career, and it really and truly was a termination. From him the public had no “ more last words.” The natural leaning of his mind, the force of habit, the solicitation of friends, or the suggestions of spontaneous advisers, never again drew him for a single night from the retreat he had adopted.

From the memorandums lately quoted, I derive an instance of the powerful prevalence of the pas-

sion, or feeling, or principle, or whatever it may be termed, operating like "the ruling passion strong in death," in the last minutes of his theatrical existence. "For several days," says Mr. Pyne, "previously to his bidding farewell to the stage, he appeared to be out of spirits. Within a week of this period he had engaged to meet a party, principally of artists, brought together on his account, at Mr. Hills', London Street, where he was much delighted in looking over the numerous sketches of that celebrated animal painter. Several of the principal professors of water-colour painting who were there, inwardly noticed his serious mood; and when he quitted the party, about nine o'clock, one who knew him well accounted for it, as was then thought, and afterwards proved very satisfactorily, namely, that his feeling mind was brooding over his approaching separation from the stage. The unusual attention which he received, arising, as it obviously did, from that sympathy which is felt by good and ingenuous friends, such as those by whom he was surrounded, when they are about to part with an old and valued associate unknowing of his future destiny,—these attentions he most sensibly felt, for when the approaching event was alluded to, an audible sigh escaped him, and more than once I saw the tear starting to the surface of his eye.

"It happened that a note had been left for him

at his residence, from the theatre, to inform him that an unforeseen event had rendered it necessary to change the after-piece for the night, and he was, consequently, in requisition to play there, and his servant was despatched with the summons to this party.

“ Every one present endeavoured to persuade him not to go, but to let it appear that he was not to be found. Persuasion, however, was vain : “ No,” said he, “ I have played a fair game throughout life, and I would not, now that my professional career is so nearly ended, have my conscience burthened with the commission of so selfish an act ;” adding, “ whatever other faults I may have committed, I never once forfeited my engagement with the public.” At nine o’clock, punctually, according to order, his servant knocked at the street door with a hackney-coach in waiting, and Bannister left one of the most interesting parties, as he afterwards declared, to fulfil his duty at the theatre, which he was so near the moment of quitting for ever.”

After the particular observations already made on his general powers, and the several parts which he performed, little recapitulation is necessary. As a servant of the public, his conduct was most eminently exemplary. No youthful irregularity, or habitual propensity, even, for a single night, kept him from the performance of his duty, subjected an audience to disappointment, laid the manager

under the necessity of tendering an apology, or placed him in the degrading position of soliciting pardon for the past, or forbearance for the present. Whatever gusts, or even storms, might be excited by popular feeling, his behaviour, far from being abject or cringing, was always firm and manly, yet respectful; and when public justice decreed the condemnation of any piece, there always appeared a reluctance to inflict pain on him, a sort of exceptive amnesty for honest Jack Bannister.

In addition to his great zeal for the pleasure of the public, he always evinced, without ostentation, a true regard for the interests of the house, a total forgetfulness of all personal feeling, and a determination to exert all his powers in promoting the general welfare. Thus when he had been celebrated in any character, if it was essayed by another player, he evinced neither envy nor dissatisfaction; but retired from the piece, or accepted a different character in it, as might appear necessary. His descent from the lover of Ophelia to her grave-digger has recently been noticed; so when he was called upon to play Francis, he never demurred because he had performed the Prince of Wales in the same piece; when Dowton was brought forward in *Sheva*, or Elliston played the three Singles, Bannister displayed not the slightest discontent, but was acknowledged by both performers as an intimate and ex-

cellent friend. In his whole career, his effort was to win the great prize of public favour by vigorously pressing forward, not by keeping others back. His powers were obscured and his efforts restrained many years, because other performers retained a sort of chartered property in parts which he showed himself able to play with consummate ability, but his pretensions were never so urged as to impede the progress of any other individual. In fact, there was no reason why he should covet additional employment, for I believe no man who ever appeared on the stage played so many parts in all the diversified forms of the drama.

On his general characteristics on the stage, little can be added to that which already has been advanced. It may fairly be said, that in no line which he undertook did he make a conspicuous failure.

Tragedy was his first aim, and in that he was encouraged by the best critics and the most admired performer of the day. But soon after Bannister's appearance, the tone and mode of tragic exhibition were totally changed. The unforced, natural, and almost comic manner of delivering the mere cursory dialogue, was changed for one in which it seemed to be assumed that no sentence, however ordinary, or even unimportant, could have been written without an occult meaning; no phrase could have been penned without a concealed point.

“Will you play upon this instrument?” was delivered as if it had been a declaration of hostility, or the announcement of a detected conspiracy; and the very little which Cibber has left of the rich sportive sarcasm with which Shakspeare endued the character of Richard, is so suppressed, that when the tyrant banters his mother he may almost be expected to aim his dagger at her heart.

Garrick’s agile movement and elegant levity, in which Bannister might have been a valuable follower, were utterly superseded; a dignified and super-majestic manner was thrown around every character, from Shakspeare’s murderous Thane to Rowe’s gay rake. This taste descended through all the performers in tragedy, and he who had to deliver a message of no more importance than “Cæsar sends health to Cato,” would well have earned Quin’s indignant reproof, “I wish he’d sent it by some other messenger.”

Mrs. Siddons and Kemble, by the lofty grace of their persons, and the refined dignity of their manners, put to flight, for their day at least, all hopes that could be entertained by those who, without all the perfections of Garrick, struggled against the disadvantages which result from the want of a stately elevation of form. When Mrs. Siddons appeared and acted, the effect was similar to that which might have been expected, if one of the sublimest

conceptions of Michael Angelo had been animated and inspired for the occasion, and Kemble gave us everything which could have been achieved if the same miracle had been performed on the most perfect production of the chisel or the pencil, employed in the representation of Roman or Grecian life, person, and manners. In them these perfections were gifts of nature, improved to their highest pitch by art and study ; in them they were becoming and captivating ; but they who attempted to form themselves, by imitating those incomparable models, would soon become monotonous mannerists, mere plaster casts, humbly representing the noble statues ; tame, clumsy wood-cuts, engraved after the inimitable picture.

From such a degraded position education, taste, and ambition rescued Bannister ; and whatever he might have been in the School of Garrick, he never could have been deemed a proficient in the School of Kemble. It is not meant to be asserted that he would ever, under any circumstances, have been a first-rate tragedian, but certainly the altered state of dramatic performance was adverse to his attempts.

What he was in comedy, and in comic opera, has been so much described that addition is unnecessary ; but there is a sort of midway character,

uniting the pathos of tragedy with the hilarity of comedy, in which he was peculiarly great, and, if the expression may be used without offence, unrivalled. Let those, and they are still many, who recollect him in a long line of characters,—in Sadi, for example, La Gloire, Shacaback, or Walter,—speak their feelings, and I am certain they must accord with mine on this subject.

His power over the audience was derived from the simple, though not very usual means of appearing to be unconscious of their presence. He not only laid no traps for their applause, used no gestures, looks, or efforts to obtain it, but when it was given spontaneously, and even tumultuously, he was never driven from the business of the scene; if his voice could not for a time be heard, his action never was suspended, and the character in the play was never for a moment set aside to show the contented, the overjoyed, the elate individual, Bannister.

He acquired fame by deserving, not by courting it, and while he enjoyed the public approbation with all the sensibility of his excellent heart, he never in public or in private showed an affected complacency or an overweening pride.

As a parting mark of respect and good feeling toward this eminent and respected performer, the

committee of management, before the next opening of the theatre, on the suggestion of T. Dibdin and Mr. Rae, transmitted to him a free admission, for himself and family, enabling them to visit that theatre at pleasure, of which he had so long been a conspicuous ornament.

CHAPTER XXX.

Observations on Bannister's retiring from the stage.—His general estimation.—View of his epistolary correspondence.—Dinner of the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund.—His allusion to the Duke of York.—Letters to him from Kelly,—Elliston,—Miss Kelly.—His liberal judgment on theatrical performers ;—T. P. Cooke,—Master Burke.—Extracts from his Diary ;—T. P. Cooke again,—Mathews,—Miss Phillips,—Madame Vestris,—Charles Kemble,—Kean,—Fawcett,—Mrs. Jordan,—Braham.—Mathews, Harley, and Liston call him father.—Harley's introduction to him.—Letters between them.—Letter from Liston.—He is generally called Jack.—His jubilee as a performer.—Epigram by Sir George Rose.—Letters to him from Colman.—Conversation on the office of deputy licenser.—Letters from Sir George Beaumont.—Mr. W. Linley.—Mr. Rogers.—Dinner parties at that gentleman's.—Letters from Mr. Coutts.—General Phipps.—Miss Jane Porter.—Leigh Hunt.—John Hunt.

IN retiring when he did from the profession he had never ceased to adorn, Bannister evinced that solid judgment and unperverted taste which had distinguished him throughout his life. His absence had never been desired. The public witnessed with regret the attacks made upon him by illness, but they never had reason to think that his infirmity infected his playing; unlike the Archbishop of Granada in "Gil Blas," whose sermons smell of the apoplexy, the acting of Bannister never was, in the

slightest degree, “redolent” of gout. The graceful and animated vigour of his motion, the silver tone and deep feeling of his voice, the enlivening play of his smile, and the animated lustre of his eye, had not only remained to him, but were undiminished and unenfeebled; nor was eulogy ever more true and justly applied, than one which declared that his first performance of Walter did not exceed, in any dramatic requisite, his last personation of the character, a personation for which no successor has made compensation to those who remember it, or afforded commensurate gratification to those who had not that advantage.

But the reception of a player by an audience depends always on present impression; the craving appetite for pleasure demands instant gratification; the violent sensation of distaste cannot be appeased by recollection of past delight, or, even if so far mitigated as not to display itself in immediate explosion, it ferments into impatience, or settles in listlessness. Happy, therefore, the public performer whose circumstances enable him, and whose correct judgment induces him, to avoid the situation so well described by Matt Prior.

“The man in graver tragic known
(Though his best part long since was done)
Still on the stage desires to tarry;
And he who played the Harlequin,
After the jest, still leads the scene,
Unwilling to retire though weary.”

Had avarice been his ruling passion, he might have continued some years in the enjoyment of his salary and an annual benefit ; but although he always showed a manly prudence in retaining what he acquired, he never was infected with the sordid vice of covetousness, the desire of grasping more than fairly appertained to him. Neither was he the slave of vanity—I mean of that weak and silly passion which makes a person think that no other in the world is so fit to be admired ; that where they are the sun shines, while in their absence puny planets twinkle, but do not enlighten ; just display their own existence without vivifying the objects around them. Bannister had that just self-consideration, without which no man can sustain a position requiring active display, but he had no overweening self-regard which prevented his duly feeling the merits of others ; and, above all things, he never was desirous of any renown or emolument which was inconsistent with the principles and feelings of a man of honour, virtue, and benevolence.

His life in retirement was extended to a term of twenty-one years, but it produced few incidents worthy of commemoration. It was peaceable and happy, not chequered by calamity, disturbed by passion, or agitated by apprehension. A competent fortune, a virtuous and happy family, well regulated desires, and a tranquil mind, afforded all the means

which man can expect of passing the residue of his days in comfort, and terminating it without any, but those inevitable, pains “which flesh is heir to.”

This portion of the voyage of life affords no great scope for narrative or observation. To be chased by a pirate, to be boarded by an enemy, to be tossed by the pitiless storm, to see before one the breakers which to touch is instant destruction, to feel a scarcity of water, to fear a want of victuals, all or any of these fill the mind of the mariner or passenger with alarming thoughts, and give strength and variety to his narrative and to his description ; but when none of these incidents remain, when free from fear of an enemy, well victualled and watered, his light vessel glides through a tranquil ocean, wafted by an uniform and favourable trade-wind, sure of arriving at a friendly haven, nothing remains to be related, and observation is confined to those phenomena of nature which must occasionally occur, or those extraordinary productions of the deep which will ever and anon present themselves.

Retired, as he was, from all the regular pursuits of public life, it remains only to consider Bannister in his different relations with society, taking the objects in a manner rather miscellaneous, bound by no order of narrative, but occasionally retrospective, occasionally prospective, as the connexion of parties, not the course of time, may seem to recommend.

In filling up this part of the subject, much resort will be had to letters ; but of these he did not take much care ; those which remain must rather be received as a specimen than as a detailed proof of the affection and confidence with which he was regarded by every one who knew him. Many of these letters are on matters of no great importance, but they are given to show the kind feeling entertained by those who wrote them, and in that light they tend to prove the merit of the man to whom such kindness was always tendered, and against whom an expression denoting anger or complaint was never vented. In no one letter that I have seen, is there a single phrase which has for its object to deprecate ill-humour, to soften resentment, or to moderate pride or haughtiness ; favours are asked with the confidence created by known benignity ; presents are tendered or acknowledged with the frankness which denotes an absence of embarrassment, and recollections of the past and anticipations of the future are couched in expressions demonstrative of sentiments warmly and sincerely felt by the writers. In such communications no matter is too light or frivolous for the purpose of biography, so far, at least, as it is confined to the display of social character, and not meant to affect the public life of the subject.

I have already noticed an attack made on his

loyalty in a newspaper, but the refutation is complete ; and whoever the author may have been, charity can be extended no further than to consider him as having laboured under a mistake. Jack Taylor, in "The Records of his Life," mentions a story, told by some one whom he does not name, imputing to Bannister a mean and sordid act toward his own father. He justly terms it "a malignant fabrication," and adds that personal chastisement would have been inflicted on the calumniator, but for the remonstrance of Mr. Taylor, offered through compassion to the offender's family. One other fact has been communicated to me, of a degraded creature, whose works disgraced the press, and whose vices made him the scorn of society ; one John Williams, who, imitating a bad model, though infinitely superior to him, Peter Pindar, took on himself the name of Anthony Pasquin. This creature, after enjoying the luxury of a tavern dinner at Bannister's expense, went to another place, at a short distance, to revile and abuse him. The timely menace of a cudgel quieted the calumniator, and he was afterward permitted to sneak out of British society, too much honoured by the unmitigated castigation which Gifford bestowed on him. I mention these three unimportant instances, merely to add, that after all possible research, I have not been able to discover one more.

Solicitous for the interest of the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund, Bannister made great exertions to establish an annual public dinner, that it might be on a par with that of Covent Garden, which derived considerable benefit from this source. This design was not carried into effect during the period of his being Master. On his retirement from the stage, he resigned the mastership, and was succeeded by Mr. Kean. Shortly afterward, the first dinner in aid was celebrated at the Freemasons' Tavern, on which occasion the Duke of York presided. On Bannister's health, as the late Master, being proposed, he made a short speech, in which he adverted to the comparative state of the two funds, and the greater share of prosperity hitherto enjoyed by that of Covent Garden. He then referred to the increasing resources of their own fund, and the improved prospect which the present illustrious patronage afforded; and he said, "Our worthy Master, Mr. Kean, may here exclaim with his usual excellence,—

‘ Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by the sun of York.’”

The Duke, in conversation with Mr. Colman, afterwards expressed himself greatly pleased with Bannister's compliment, and said that it had been done in a manner most kind and gentlemanly. No one could appreciate these qualities more justly than

the excellent and illustrious prince who was so pleased to commend them.

From this public display, and the high testimonial which attended it, I turn to the communications of his private friends, and it will appear, that in all things, even so slight a matter as an invitation to dinner, his wishes, his ease and his comfort, were anxiously and affectionately considered. As specimens :

“ MY DEAR BANNISTER,

“ I have fixed with my friend Theodore Hook to dine with me on Saturday next at six o'clock. Terry, Yates, and George Robins will be of the party : if you will favour me and join us, I shall be delighted to see you. You shall do as you please, and go away when you please.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ M. KELLY.

“ April 20th. 6, Tavistock Row.”

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ I had left to my friend Linley the charge of bringing you to dine with me to-morrow, but I am so anxious to be favoured with your company, that

I cannot resist sending my written request that you will partake of my humble fare. You will meet a few friends who will be much gratified by your society ; amongst them will be your old *double*, Captain Wathen, whose eyes sparkled when I told him of the probability of your meeting. Linley will call for you, and my dinner hour will be precisely half-past five.

“ Yours very truly,

“ R. W. ELLISTON.”

From the accomplished and admired Miss Kelly, when she opened the Strand Theatre, with an entertainment similar in its nature to that with which her brother-in-law, Mathews, had so long attracted and captivated the town, Bannister received, quite unexpectedly, the following kind and engaging invitation :

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I speak from my heart, when I assure you, that I should esteem it an *honour*, and in all respects most gratifying to my feelings, if I thought you could be amused by my performance at the Strand Theatre. Will you, therefore, let me know how you feel disposed on the subject, and allow me on Thurs-

day next, or any other evening most agreeable to yourself, to secure you a comfortable private box?

“ Yours, dear Sir,

“ With affectionate respect,

“ LITTLE FANNY KELLY.

“ 73, Dean Street, Soho Square. Feb. 19th, 1833.”

An invitation so kind, from a person so accomplished, could not be received with indifference, or treated with neglect. I have not a copy of Bannister's answer, which was sent the next day, but I recollect that it began with an expression denoting that Miss Kelly always spoke from her heart, which made her such an excellent performer and universal favourite. As soon as his health would permit (March 7th) he paid her a visit of acknowledgment, and as soon afterward as he was able (March 30th), in company with Mrs. Bannister, accepted the proffered kindness of a private box. Of the superior quality of Miss Kelly's entertainment, it would be foreign from my purpose to offer an opinion. It was acknowledged by all; and had its merits been less conspicuous, or even doubtful, they could not have been scanned by an abler or a more feeling and liberal critic than him whose presence she had invited. “ I was much delighted,” he says in his diary, “ by the extraordinary abilities of Miss Kelly.

She is a wonderful performer, and ought to make her fortune by her exhibition in the Strand."

This testimony of regard from Miss Kelly was not peculiar nor exclusive: the ladies, in general, with whom he had performed on the stage, felt for him sentiments of regard, which could only be excited by his gentleman-like and cheerful assiduities. Of the sentiments of Mrs. Jordan and the late Duchess of St. Albans I have already had occasion to speak, and I can add, that in his very latest days, when illness was fast encroaching on his life, he heard with great sensibility that his door had been approached, for the purpose of kind inquiry, by one long retired from public life, his old friend and comic associate, Mrs. Bland.

But his benevolent feelings were not confined to those performers who with him had shared the plaudits of the town, or participated in the difficulties of securing them. He watched with interest the progress of rising performers, and paid the warmest tribute to their merits. In fact the drama still continued to be his passion; the prosperity of theatres and the success of players always afforded him the highest gratification. I remember when he called on me one morning, he said, "I went to the Surrey Theatre last night; I saw 'Black-eyed Susan;' and egad, at my age, and with my experience in the dramatic way, I was ashamed

to find myself every now and then wiping my eyes ; but that T. P. Cooke !—his playing, his feeling, his perfect sailor-like manner, his appearance, his dancing ! Oh ! it was delightful all the way through ! And it really was a pretty black-eyed girl that acted Susan. After that,” he proceeded, “ there was that clever boy, Master Burke ; he quite made me feel for Napoleon in Elba. He did not speak a word, but he looked the character exactly ; he traversed the stage gloomily ; he cast up his eyes to heaven, and down to the ground, he seemed absorbed in deep and uneasy thoughts ; and when he drew out his snuff-box, he did not rap it (thus) in the manner of a light-hearted Frenchman, but he gave it two or three melancholy taps, took his pinch slowly, with a sigh, and slowly replaced the box in his pocket.”

Specimens of his liberal judgment on theatrical performers occur frequently in a Diary, which, like so many other men, he began, prosecuted for a time, and then dropped. If he had kept it long and with perseverance, it would have been highly valuable.

“ Nov. 22nd, 1828. — Went to the Adelphi Theatre, saw ‘ The Pilot,’ a very popular piece here. T. P. Cooke is a performer of extraordinary merit. He acts a sailor excellently, and dances and fights better than I ever saw on the stage in similar

characters. He rejoices all the gods when he appears, and delights the accompanying mortals. Mathews continues as versatile as ever, and can make his audience laugh or cry, just as he pleases; and he is always sure to please. Mathews is not only inimitable on the stage, but a worthy and valuable member of society. May all such fellows thrive and prove fortunate!"

To this extract I subjoin a few others demonstrating the readiness with which he received entertainment from the drama, and his liberality in estimating the talents of performers.

"Saw in the orchestra of Drury Lane the new tragedy of 'Rimini,' in which Miss Phillips appeared. She is beautiful, and a charming actress.

"Called on Dr. Booth. Mrs. Booth, who went to the theatre with the Doctor to see 'Rienzi,' spoke very highly of Miss Phillips. This lady's success has been great.—Why? because she has great natural requisites, fine figure, fine face, a delightful voice, with power and feeling.

"Saw a piece at the Adelphi theatre, in a private box, after dining with Yates and his wife, Mathews and Mrs. Mathews, called the 'May Queen,' in which a sottish tinker was inimitably played by Mathews. After which, a piece called 'Wanted a Partner,' in which Mathews was most excellent in the assumption of several characters. Yates did

well what he had to do. T. P. Cooke was particularly clever in an after-piece, and Sinclair sang charmingly.

“Went to Covent Garden theatre. Saw ‘The Wife’s Stratagem,’ ‘King Charles,’ and ‘The Invincibles,’ in which Vestris is remarkably clever. I was enraptured with the excellent acting of Charles Kemble and Fawcett in ‘King Charles;’ indeed, the whole night’s performance was very gratifying to an old stager. I am just as much pleased at seeing a stage representation now as I was five-and-fifty years ago.”

In his diary of an excursion to Exeter, in 1828, he says, “I hear Kean is playing to crowded houses at Plymouth; Vestris is to play three nights next week in succession, and the three following at Exeter. Vestris and Kean are the most attractive, except my favourite Liston, and he keeps his ground against any of them. An actor’s is a pleasant life, if popular, and touching the rhino; or else ‘stale, flat, and unprofitable.’ A tragic hero, in an empty house, is as miserable as ‘a rat in a rag-shop.’” Sympathy, and not personal experience, surely dictated the last observation.

On Fawcett’s retirement (20th May, 1830) he says, “To-night Fawcett takes his leave of the public: he is certainly one of the first low comedians that ever trod the stage, and is deservedly appre-

ciated as an admirable character in private. The actors are greatly indebted to him for having done so much for the theatrical fund, and many unborn will have reason to bless his memory."

Of Mrs. Jordan he expresses himself in affectionate and well-merited terms. "Received a letter from Mr. Morton, to call and see a picture of the late inimitable Mrs. Jordan, whose memory I reverence. No woman, I think, ever uttered comedy like her. She was perfectly good-tempered, and possessed the best of hearts."

A false rumour of Braham's death, in 1834, drew from him the following observations: "I have just seen in 'The Herald' the death of Mr. Braham by cholera last Saturday. I had the greatest respect for him. I heard the late Charles Dibdin say that Braham was the best singer he ever knew, in whatever country produced." The subject of this remark may congratulate himself on the knowledge that this is not a posthumous eulogy, and all who know him, while they rejoice in his well being, will join in the honest tribute of disinterested commendation.

With such qualities, and with a heart uniformly disposed to acts of friendship and benevolence, it is not to be mentioned as matter of surprise, that all his brethren of the green-room looked to him with sentiments of affection, as well as admiration.

Three very eminent comedians, Mathews, Harley, and Liston, delighted to call him "father."

Harley, like a true and affectionate son, after justly describing his parent by adoption, in the words of Bassanio, as

"The kindest man,
The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies,"

relates the origin and progress of their acquaintance in these terms :—" I had not the good fortune to be known to Mr. Bannister at the period of his retirement from public life ; but having, shortly after my engagement at Drury Lane theatre as his successor, met him at the house of a mutual friend, who was desirous of bringing us together, I availed myself of that introduction, and addressed to him a letter expressing my anxiety to profit by any professional advice such an experienced veteran would be kind enough to give to a young man on his entrance into life. He replied,—

‘Gower Street, December 30th, 1815.

‘MY DEAR SIR,

‘I have been confined to my room more than three weeks with the gout ; I am now recovering, though slowly. Early next week, if you will favour me with a visit in Gower Street, I shall be happy to afford you any gratification in my power. You

are my successor ; I beg leave to say, that I do not know any person more calculated to tread in my shoes ; and I sincerely hope you may never have occasion for the gouty ones.

‘ I remain, my dear Sir,

‘ Ever yours sincerely,

‘ JOHN BANNISTER.

‘ P. S.—I have the gout in the writing hand.’

“ I speedily accepted this kind invitation,” Harley continues, “ and found my friend occupied in looking over several manuscript copies of favourite characters which he desired I would accept as a proof of the interest he took in my welfare ; at the same time taking my hand, and addressing me in the following words :—

‘ My dear young friend, I have just quitted a profession of which I trust you will become an ornament ; I am most happy to be known to you, and if you will take the trouble to visit a gouty old fellow and listen to him, I think I can give you some hints that may be serviceable. I was a pupil of that great master of his art, David Garrick ; you will, I hope, lose nothing by becoming mine, and the more frequently you draw upon your dramatic father, the more happy you will make me.’

“ On that day I had the gratification to open an account with John Bannister, and for more than

twenty years every draft upon his time and talents was paid at sight ! In sickness and in health he was alike ready and willing to ‘fight his battles o’er again,’ and he has frequently sat up in his bed and enacted before me some favourite scene, smiling between each twinge of the gout, and exclaiming, ‘My dear boy, when you are weary of these matters and retire from the stage, I hope you may be as proud of your successor as I am of mine.’

“My friend is dead ! but he still lives in my affectionate remembrance.”

On this narrative and description no observation can be necessary ; the feeling of Harley corresponds, as it ought, with the benevolence of Bannister. I add a little more of their correspondence, or rather a few of Bannister’s letters to Harley, showing the excellent harmony which prevailed between them.

“June 1st, 1825.

“This day ten years I quitted the stage.

“DEAR HARLEY,

“I sincerely congratulate you on your great benefit last night. Never *spare yourself* on these occasions, make out a good bill, and I will answer for the receipts till you close the theatrical account, and produce a receipt in full of all demands. And now oblige me (for my benefit) with your company on Sunday next at half-past five precisely,

when I hope to prepare an entertainment which I trust will be well received, and *go down* pleasantly. Yours, my dear Harley,

“Most truly,

“JOHN BANNISTER.”

“Gower Street, June 8th, 1825.

“DEAR HARLEY,

“I shall be much obliged if you will reserve me two admissions for next Friday. My servant shall call at your house for them on Friday morning at twelve o'clock.

“Farewell! remember me,

(Sinks through a trap O. P.)

“Yours ever, J. B.”

“November 20th, 1825.

“DEAR HARLEY,

“It is now a month since you left me in a terrible fit of gout. Why have you not called? I am only beginning to walk. Make some amends by showing me your smiling countenance, and at the same time write or procure me admissions for two next Wednesday. Let me have them, if you can, to-morrow or Tuesday. Remember me kindly to your mother and sisters.

“Yours most truly,

“JOHN BANNISTER.”

“ January 26th, 1830.

“ MY DEAR HARLEY,

“ I have been a prisoner in Gower Street since I received your kind invitation. A visit now and then would have been reviving—why have you kept away?—Can’t you endure a little more of the old flame before it sinks in the socket? Make me amends for your long absence, and come and take a family dinner on Thursday, the 28th January, at half-past five.

“ Pray, come—and believe me ever,

“ Your attached and sincere friend,

“ J. BANNISTER.”

“ October 29th, 1830.

“ UNDUTIFUL SON,

“ The play-house has been open three weeks, and you have not condescended to come near your poor father, who has been suffering with the gout nearly a month. Your elder brother Mathews would not have served me so. Come with all speed, and like the prodigal son ask the forgiveness of a fond father, and I will give you my blessing with the gouty hand I am endeavouring to write with.

“ JOHN BANNISTER.”

“ July 7th, 1832.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ As you wish to have one of my sticks, I send you a stick of cinnamon, which, when you are tired of, you may scrape into pies and puddings.

“ Yours (my queer stick of a son,)

“ Affectionately,

“ JOHN BANNISTER.”

This was not the only time that Bannister bestowed a stick on his son; for during his last illness he gave him his Garrick mourning-ring, his Shakspeare jubilee medal set in a silver box, and a handsome stick formerly used at Windsor by George the Third, and which had been purchased for Bannister by Mr. Rundall.

Twelve years after his retirement, he received from Liston the following good-humoured and filial epistle :

“ Saturday, January 20th, 1827.

“ HONOURED PARENT,

“ I enclose you the orders you request, and with respects to my dear mamma, I remain, my dearest father,

“ Your ever dutiful and

“ Affectionate son,

“ J. LISTON.”

Happy the man who, in treading the last steps of the journey of life, finds his path bestrewed with flowers so simple, yet so sweet and refreshing.

The jest-loving, laugh-provoking Falstaff, was Jack with his familiars; in this way all the world were Bannister's familiars, but toward him familiarity never bred contempt, and this boyish sobriquet was never used by any one but as a mark of courtesy and affection, and in a spirit of cordial vivacity he so used it himself. Colman has recorded an instance which is of value in several respects, transcribing it from the original.

“First appearance at the Haymarket for my father's benefit, 1778, in ‘The Apprentice.’ First appearance at Drury Lane, 1779, in Zaphna, in ‘Mahomet.’ Took leave of the stage at Drury Lane, Thursday, June 1st, 1815. Garrick instructed me in the first four parts I played,—‘The Apprentice,’ Zaphna, (Mahomet,) Dorilas, (Merope,) and Achmet (Barbarossa). JACK Bannister, to his dear friend George Colman, June 30th, 1828.”

Apropos to his first appearance. On the 27th of August following this memorandum, he received a note announcing his Jubilee.

“MR. MASSINGHAM, Box-book keeper, presents his respectful compliments to Mr. Bannister, and takes the liberty to congratulate him on his Jubilee day,—

the 27th of August, 1778, the old Theatre Royal, Haymarket (50 years), Dick in ‘The Apprentice.’”

Sir George Rose, not less known for his wit and vivacity than for those talents which gave him such conspicuous success in that arduous profession, the law, was a near neighbour of Bannister, living on the opposite side of Gower Street. One day as he was walking he was hailed by Bannister, who said, “Stop a moment, Sir George, and I will go over to you.” “No,” said the good-humoured punster, “I never made you *cross* yet, and I will not begin now.” He joined the valetudinarian, and held a short conversation, and immediately after his return home wrote—

“ON MEETING ‘THE YOUNG VETERAN’ TODDLING UP GOWER STREET, WHEN HE TOLD ME HE WAS SEVENTY.

“With seventy years upon his back,
Still is my honest friend ‘Young Jack,’
Nor spirits check’d, nor fancy slack,
But fresh as any daisy.
Though time has knock’d his *stumps* about,
He cannot bowl his temper out,
And all the Bannister is stout,
Although the *steps* be crazy.”

This good-natured *jeu d’esprit* was left by its author almost immediately at Bannister’s door. It has appeared in print. Bannister gave it to Charles Mathews, to subjoin to the account of a portrait of himself in the catalogue of the pictures of the late comedian, now in the possession of the Garrick Club.

In a former page I have cited some other puns to which the name of Bannister gave rise ; but he himself carried this humour to its full extent in a passage in one of his memorandums, when on a visit to his son John. I should not perhaps think it deserving of insertion, did it not, besides its small pretensions to wit, display an honest and genuine feeling of the best and kindest family affection. “ It is a great gratification to hear John speak always so affectionately of his brother, who, he says, is one of the best fellows in the world ;—and I think so too. The Bannisters are likely to increase, and should they get up as they go on, though we cannot boast of the family tree, we may of the family *stair-case*. Perhaps I am descended from the Earl of *Stair*. I never inquired at the Herald’s office, as the principal officer might say, ‘ Sir, if you do not get down *stairs*, I may authenticate your *descent* by throwing you over the *bannisters*.’ ”

As exhibiting a view of Bannister’s estimation in the eyes of his friends in various ranks of life, I shall here transcribe some letters which have come to my hands, through the kindness of his family.

I begin with those received from him whom, in the extract above cited, he justly terms “ his dear friend George Colman.” Of their attachment to each other the elegant and powerful dramatist speaks in these terms :—“ Separating as we did,

through accident, and with the kindest sentiments for each other, it was not likely that we should forget, or neglect further to cultivate, our mutual regard. That regard is now so mellowed by time, that it will never cease till Time himself—who, in ripening our friendship, has been all the while whetting his scythe for the friends,—shall have mowed down the men and gathered in his harvest.”

“ 11th Nov. 1811.

“ MY DEAR JACK,

“ I have been somewhat mauled by illness since I saw you,—I have kept my bed for nearly three days,—been jalaped, starved, sweated, and be-devil’d !—hence has proceeded my silence.

“ I have seen the party you mention but once these eleven days, and that was on Friday se’nnight last, when I found no opportunity of mentioning the subject on which you are naturally anxious. To say the truth, so much was then inquired relative to my own interests, and so much is in agitation about them at this moment, that I fear being thought obtrusive by suggesting other points at such a juncture, but I will not be unmindful of using my humble endeavours when the time shall seem propitious.

“ A thousand thanks for your ‘ picture in little,’ which I assure you I prize most highly. It is an excellent drawing, and I really think the strongest

likeness I ever saw. A good portrait of a celebrated actor is a *desideratum* with every theatrical amateur, although he may care little for the man, and nothing at all for the painter ; but in addition to its mere professional value, I have the best resemblance extant of my old friend Jack Bannister, —and my friend's daughter is the artist ! Beg her to share my best thanks with you, and believe me ever most truly yours,

“ G. COLMAN.”

“ 16th October 1820, 5, Melina Place.

“ Although I am always happy to obey your summons, my dear Jack, however short the notice, I am now obliged to beg a little longer time before I attend you. The gout has been inflicting a much more tedious visit upon me than usual, which has so much deranged my whole bodily system, that I must dine at home for some days to come. If you will name any day after this week (which I hope you will), I feel bold enough to say that I shall be at your service.

“ I am very sorry to find you have been indisposed ; I suppose a gouty fellow-sufferer, so you need not doubt my sympathy ! Best and kindest regards to Mrs. Bannister.

“ Ever yours most truly,

“ G. COLMAN.”

“ 5th May 1822, Fulham Lodge.

“ Your letter, my dear Jack, reached me here last night, and I have had no opportunity of sending you an earlier answer. On Wednesday next I shall be most happy to attend you. I shall come with my play in my pocket, but I had better keep it there, if you have anybody in addition to your own family party to dine with you.

“ Strangers would think my reading a bore, and I have no right to hold forth but to the *select*. Best regards to Mrs. Bannister.

“ Yours ever, and most truly,

“ G. COLMAN.”

“ 27th June 1828, Brompton Square.

“ MY DEAR JACK,

“ Let us have no more eternities between our meetings,—and waiting your return from Exeter is a ‘South Sea off discovery.’ On Thursday next therefore, at six o’clock, all here will be most happy to receive you.

“ Ever affectionately yours,

“ G. COLMAN.

“ P. S.—By six o’clock I mean the dinner-hour. Come as much sooner as you can, that you may swallow a *Chapter* or two previously.”

“ 12th July 1831, Brompton Square.

“ MY DEAR JACK,

“ Your kind letter reached me an hour ago : I recognised the well-known characters on its superscription, and welcomed the hand-writing of my old and dear friend. I grieve to hear that the gout has attacked you so severely. Nobody informed me that you were ill, otherwise I should have been in Gower Street. I have suffered by some skirmishes from the enemy, but he has not this year laid a regular siege, which I attribute to the skilful engineering of Sir Henry Halford, who has kept him off, as I shall specify unto you when we meet.

“ To-morrow I must attend the levee, next day (Thursday) I shall be most happy to see you here any time after two o'clock ; but don't commit yourself too soon to the jolting of a jarvey, and if you do not feel quite stout enough yet for such an operation, send me a two-penny poster naming some other day.

“ Ever, my dear Jack,

“ Yours affectionately,

“ G. COLMAN.

“ P. S. — Kindest regards to Mrs. Bannister. When you come, we must fix some day for your taking a quiet dinner here. You need not fear my leading you into excess. Three or four glasses of sherry are now my *stint*.”

“ 25th November 1831, Brompton Square.

“ MY DEAR JACK,

“ The enclosed has ‘ lain heavy on my soul’ ever since I received it. When you desired me to scribble something for Angelo, I looked about for a peg to hang a thought upon, but without success, and then I forgot the matter altogether. If you can get me off handsomely from this work I shall be much relieved, for as to spinning periods in verse or prose ‘ I am not in the vein,’ as I was wont to be, and, to say the truth, I feel it too late in the day to put myself in a position to be drawn over the coals of criticism by contributing scraps to the publications of friends and neighbours. In exonerating me I am sure you will steer me clear of giving the slightest offence to Angelo, for whom, in remembrance of old acquaintanceship, I have a sincere respect and regard. There was a prologue which I writ and you spoke on his playing one night for your benefit in the Haymarket. I do not remember one word of it, but perhaps you do, and perhaps it might serve the purpose of his intended *opus*.

“ When I called on you so unseasonably about a fortnight ago, and was told you were at dinner, I was happy to hear that our old enemy the gout had foreborne of late to torment you. I hope we shall meet ere long. God bless you, my dear Jack.

—Make my kindest regards to Mrs. Bannister, and believe me ever, yours affectionately,

“ G. COLMAN.”

The work referred to in this letter was published under the name of “ Angelo’s Reminiscences ;” some things by Colman appeared in it, but none written expressly for the occasion.

To finish the account of his intercourse with the writer of these letters, I may mention, that shortly before Bannister left the stage, he was expressing to his friend a wish that in his retirement he could hold some situation, to prevent his being wholly unoccupied, and he spoke of the office of Deputy Licensor as one likely to suit him. “ Why, Jack !” Colman exclaimed, “ if you were a Licensor we should all write treason.” It is rather singular, that on the first vacancy Colman himself was appointed to the office : he retained it till his death, and was unsparingly and properly rigid in excluding from dramatic pieces every sentiment which could be deemed adverse to loyalty or purity. He died the 26th of October 1836, a very short time before his esteemed companion, thus verifying by an interesting coincidence his own remark, that “ Time, in ripening their friendship, had been all the while whetting his scythe for the friends.”

I next present letters from his intimate friends.

SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT TO MR. BANNISTER.

“Cole Orton Hall, Ashby de la Zouch.

“DEAR BANNISTER,

“A few days ago I sent you a little game, which I hope you received. I should also have sent some to our worthy friend Wroughton, but although I recollect he lives in Howland Street, I cannot remember the number,—pray inform me, and say something of the state of his health, for I regard and respect him exceedingly; he is one of the few left of the genuine old school, and we shall not see its like again! You were, I am sure, sorry to hear of Mr. Dance’s illness. ‘Some ills we wish for when we wish to live,’ and this of the loss of friends is amongst the most pungent evils of old age. With best compliments to Mrs. Bannister.

“I remain with sincere regard,

“Ever yours,

“G. BEAUMONT.

“Perhaps you can favour me with some theatrical news. ‘I hate all politics but theatrical politics.’”

SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT TO MR. BANNISTER.

“Cole Orton Hall, November 20th, 1820.”

‘Oh, the days when I was young!

When I laugh'd in fortune's spite.’

“And you made me laugh in spite of myself! When I look back on the last half century, what a vast variety of great and small occurrences present themselves! You know the passion I always had for the stage,—the stage, therefore, with all its appendages, stands prominent among my most pleasing recollections. Garrick, Grand Seigneur, stands at the head; the Barrys, Powell, Holland, Woodward, Shuter, King, Dodd, and though last not least, our humorous friend Parsons, join the jovial crew. As to *you*, I knew you from a child, and interested as I was for you, your whole theatrical life is before me as upon a card; indeed, every one I have mentioned, even back to Powell and Holland, are impressed upon my ‘mind’s eye’ with the vivacity of actual presence; and although I agree with you in the great merit of Liston, yet we must not forget, amongst many others, Parsons, Weston, and *another* I should mention were I not writing to *you*. It must be owned such a review of past pleasures is a great, but a melancholy indulgence, and we cannot but feel that such things *were*, but never can return. We cannot but acknowledge that there is a sadness

in the vicissitudes of things that clouds the splendour of our most pleasing recollections, and that happy, thrice happy, are those who can look forward with hope, as well as back with pleasure. What resource has an old man like myself but this? and how, without it, on any rational ground can he enjoy, as Lear says, ‘the present hour without fearing the last?’ I can assure you our old friend Smith enjoyed this advantage in a very enviable degree. The last letter I received from him, and, I believe, the last he ever wrote, demonstrates this in a most gratifying manner,—one day or other I must show it to you. But I forget I am writing to *you*! Excuse me, but I am sure you have too much sensibility not to feel these truths occasionally; besides, properly considered, such thoughts, so far from interfering with our rational enjoyments, greatly enhance their value.

“Some years since, I made a little tour to the Leasowes, Hagley, &c., with my old friend Wordsworth the poet, and we visited, amongst other places, Birmingham, and of course we went to the theatre to see ‘Venice Preserved.’ I can assure you that literally there were but five persons in the boxes, and seven in the pit! I thought the house would be discharged, but the box-keeper told me that it was a very tolerable one. Then, thought I, my friend, you must have lenten entertainment here.

However, on they went, and exerted themselves so vociferously, that the bare walls returned dismal echoes, which, together with the doleful nature of the play, was indeed melancholy. Of the performers I only recollect the person who performed *Pierre*, who, I think, was just come from America, and appeared so stupid with porter, ale, and malt liquor of all kinds, that *beer* would have been a far more appropriate appellation. A lady of my own name performed *Belvidera*, a very little creature, with a voice so pungent it pierced the ear like a canary-bird's. She exerted her shrill organ with such astonishing power in the mad scene, I thought she would have broken a blood vessel, and I began to think her mad in real earnest. However, I believe she survived, and I entirely recovered my hearing. I was again at Birmingham two months ago, and went to the new theatre, which is a beautiful one. I saw one of Walter Scott's novels,—I forget the name, however,—it is that in which a very good imitation of Shakespeare's clowns is introduced. This part was played by a person whose name, I think, is Denis or Denning. I am always fearful of saying much of country actors, because I have been so often disappointed on seeing them in London afterwards; but I think this man has humour; it seemed to me of the Edwin cast, and could not be imitation, as he appeared a very young man. The house, con-

trary to what it was at my last visit, was crowded to suffocation, and I could not sit out the play, which was atrociously long (like this letter), but I was pleased with this man and with Madame Vestris, who also performed: she is indeed excellent, and it was your mentioning her which brought upon you this persecution. I was quite certain you would go to see poor Dance; you never forget your friends in distress. I will write to him very soon. Pray, tell our friend Wroughton that I will send him some game very soon, but beg him not to trouble himself to write, unless he can do it without fatigue and with pleasure. When old Drury was pulled down, I told our friend George Colman, if he could procure me a piece of the boards on which Garrick had played, I would paint him a picture upon it; but some unlucky Marplot found out the stage had been new floored since his time, and the thing dropped. Now the last classical stage, on which *you* first appeared, and where Foote used nightly to split the sides of half the town, is about to be demolished, I think I should like, through your interest, to procure about a foot square of the boards; but I *will* finish.

“Compliments to Mrs. Bannister.

“Ever, with sincere regard,

“Yours,

“G. BEAUMONT.”

WILLIAM LINLEY, ESQ. TO MR. BANNISTER.

“ 3, Furnival's Inn Chambers.

“ MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

“ Will you indulge me with your company to eat beef-steaks under our sublime gridiron, at the Lyceum, on Saturday next, at five o'clock precisely? It will be a great day, and I have promised the old bard, Captain Morris, his Grace of Leinster, and Brougham the great, that I would try to get you if I could. Say, therefore, my dear Bannister, for ‘auld lang syne,’ that you will come and make happy

“ Your faithful friend,

“ W. LINLEY.”

SAMUEL ROGERS, ESQ. TO MR. BANNISTER.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ Pray dine with me to-morrow (Thursday) at half-past five, if by any chance you are disengaged.

“ Yours very truly,

“ SAML. ROGERS.”

“ Wednesday. St. James's Place.”

“MY DEAR SIR,

“If by any chance you are disengaged on Tuesday next, the 13th, pray dine with me at five o'clock. You will meet an artist or two.

“Yours very truly,

“SAML. ROGERS.”

“St. James's Place, Tuesday.

“*At five.* Send back a verbal answer.”

It may be justly observed, that these last are mere dinner cards; but the eminence of the writer gives them value, and they show how cordially Bannister was esteemed. High indeed must have been the estimation which placed him at table where he names the following guests,—the Duke and Duchess of Bedford, the Marquis and Marchioness of Lansdowne, Lord and Lady Holland, Lord Essex, Sir William Grant, the Dutch minister, and the late Governor of Bombay.

The second invitation produced a meeting equally interesting and memorable with the former. After the death of the great painter, Bannister wrote down his recollections and sentiments on this meeting. “I dined,” he says, “with Sir Thomas Lawrence and Wilkie, about seven or eight months ago, at Mr. Rogers's in St. James's Place. Rogers sent me a short note, saying, ‘If not better engaged, dine with me on Tuesday next at five o'clock. You'll meet an artist or two.’ I was punctual. On enter-

ing the room I saw Wilkie and the late Sir Thomas. I stared with pleasure, and could not help exclaiming, ‘You promised to introduce me to an artist or two, but two such artists I did not expect to meet.’ Painting and the histrionic art made a great part of our conversation. The celebrated Rogers, whose poetical works are well known, and can never be forgotten while ‘the Pleasures of Memory’ remain, is very hospitable and remarkably pleasant in conversation. In such company how could I be otherwise than happy? I can sincerely say, I never passed a day that afforded me greater satisfaction.

THOMAS COUTTS, ESQ. TO MR. BANNISTER.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I send for your perusal a letter from the Duke of Sussex, by which you will see he has promised to attend the subscription dinner for the benefit of decayed artists, and cannot dine with me, but says he will call and fix a day with Mrs. Coutts. I hope, therefore, you will see Mr. Wroughton and explain it to him, that we think it better to postpone the party till the day the Duke shall name, of which I will not fail to acquaint you, and I flatter myself the day will be soon. I will apprize Sir William Beechey of it, and I intend also to invite Mr. Colman.

“Mrs. Coutts unites in kind remembrance and good wishes, and begs you to be assured of our sincere regard and esteem, and that I ever remain,

“My dear Sir,

“Your faithful and most obedient servant,

“THOMAS COUTTS.”

“2nd March 1818.”

THOMAS COUTTS, ESQ. TO MR. BANNISTER.

“Stratton Street, 4th of March 1818.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“The Duke of Sussex has named Monday next, the 9th, at half-past six, for our dinner, in Stratton Street, when we hope for your company, and beg you to do us the favour to fix it with Mr. Wroughton. With our best compliments, and assurances that Mrs. Coutts and myself will be most happy to see you,

“Ever your most sincere

“And faithful servant,

“THOMAS COUTTS.”

GENERAL PHIPPS TO MR. BANNISTER.

“Mount Street, January 24th.

“DEAR BANNISTER,

“As I cannot at present call upon you, I write to request you to do me the favour of dining with me on Wednesday, the 1st of February, to meet

George Colman, and a few more of your friends, and the Speaker, who will be glad to know you as you will to know him. The number of the party will not exceed eight, or, at most, ten. The dinner hour is seven o'clock, but you will, of course, fortify your stomach against so long a period between breakfast and dinner, with a substantial luncheon. Present my respects and regards to Mrs. Bannister, and believe me,

“Always sincerely yours,

“E. PHIPPS.”

To these letters I subjoin a very few received at different periods, claiming his kindness, acknowledging his worth, or appealing to his benevolence.

MISS PORTER TO MR. BANNISTER.

“Thames Ditton, October 10th, 1805.

“When Mr. Bannister turns to the signature at the end of this epistle, it will announce to him the name of the writer, and perhaps from his knowledge of Mr. Ker Porter, it may obtain pardon for the freedom of this measure.

“Hearing of the present arrangement at Drury Lane, the consequent thought of a few moments stimulated me to trouble you, Sir, with this letter. I recollect that some time ago, my brother, Mr. Ker Porter, left a manuscript opera with you. I do

not know what were your sentiments upon it, but if I remember rightly, I did not think that *all* the characters were suited for Drury Lane. This season that obstacle is removed, and if there be opportunity to bring it out, and you approved of the piece when you read it ; perhaps if you were to run over it again (it never having been returned), you might perceive that it could now be very properly filled. The Governor of the Fortress, Mr. Elliston ; his Friend, Mr. Braham ; the Moorish Prince, Mr. Kelly ; Mr. Bannister's part you know. Poor Mr. Suett's must fall to his successor. For the ladies, there is Mrs. Powell for the Moorish Princess, Miss Pope for the Duenna, Signora Storace for her Ward, and Miss De Camp for the Page of the Governor.

“I need not say that I should be delighted to be empowered by Mr. Bannister to inform my brother, who is in Russia, that his opera is approved and likely to be brought upon the stage. But whether it be so or not, I know that he would be averse to the public knowing that he ever attempted such a thing ; therefore, I request the subject of this letter may not be mentioned, and that whether answered favourably to my wishes or not, Mr. Bannister will believe that as I am a sincere admirer of talents (which our degenerate taste hardly knows how to appreciate), I cannot doubt the verdict of a

judgment which is dictated by Genius and Nature, and must always continue to consider myself, with appropriate sentiments,

“ His most obedient servant,

“ JANE PORTER.”

MR. LEIGH HUNT TO MR. BANNISTER.

“ York Buildings, New Road, Feb. 6th, 1833.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ You gave great comfort yesterday to a heart which you have often touched and delighted. I could not refuse it — neither the circumstances around us, nor the feelings due to yourself, would allow me to do so. You will not think ill of me when I say that I welcomed it with as much frankness as it was bestowed, and I said that to the friend who was with me, ‘ Here is delightful Bannister *acting* as he always did ! Here is the secret of the man who used to make us shed tears in Job Thornberry and Walter !’

“ Pardon me, dear sir, for writing to you in this critical strain, and believe me ever most truly,

“ Your old admirer and grateful friend,

“ LEIGH HUNT.

“ P. S.—This letter is brought by one of my boys in order that I may be sure it has reached you : be kind enough to let him know as much.”

MR. JOHN HUNT TO MR. BANNISTER.

“ Sep. 19th, 1803.

“ SIR,

“ Permit me in respectful acknowledgment of the favours you have conferred on me to request your acceptance of the painting herewith sent.

“ It is a portrait of Talma, and it occurred to me that a likeness of the most celebrated tragic actor in France, might not be wholly unacceptable to the principal English comedian.

“ Of its merit as a piece of art, you, Sir, will be the best judge ; but in justice to my brother, Mr. Robert Hunt, the artist, it may be fair to observe that the resemblance has been pronounced a most accurate one by the father of M. Talma, who now resides in this metropolis, and is the same that was exhibited at the last exhibition of the Royal Academy.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your obliged and obedient servant,

“ JOHN HUNT,

“ Printer of the Weekly Messenger.”

“ No. 7, London Street, Fitzroy Square.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

General view of the remaining years of Bannister's life.—His family.—Mrs. Bannister.—Mr. John Bannister.—Mr. Charles Bannister.—Affectionate and pious expressions of Bannister,—his general piety.—Bannister's daughter, Elizabeth, married to Stephen Morgan, Esq.—His second daughter, Rosina, married to W. Gelston, Esq.—His third daughter, Ann, married to John Eieke, Esq., on whose death their children were left to the care of Bannister.—His fourth daughter, Fanny, married to Major Rotton.—His remark on Mrs. Bannister's care in the early instruction of his children.—His sister Jane and Mr. Swendall.—Bannister's mode of life,—his walks,—visits,—his convivial qualities.—Songs,—one given him by Captain Morris.—His occasional excursions;—in 1818, to Holland,—Waterloo;—in 1825, to the West of England to his son John,—inconveniences of the country,—insects,—hints to cockneys,—a walk to a christening.—1826. Visit to his son John at Ross,—a confirmation.—1827. Trip to Paris with Mrs. Bannister,—depression of spirits,—speedily recovered.—1828. Visit to his son John at Exeter,—his observations on a town life contrasted with one in the country.—Same year, to Boulogne with Mr. Heath.—Theatre.—1829. Excursion to Brighton with Mr. Heath.—1830. Visit to Mr. Morgan at Goodrest Park,—his great happiness there.—1832. Renews his visit.—Observations on these excursions.

It now remains only to record the last years of Bannister's life, distinguished by no public or personal event, but a constant display of corporeal suffering, mitigated by universal regard and esteem,

and in effect subdued by unvarying goodness of heart, equanimity, and cheerfulness.

As we are to view him principally as a man retired within the bosom of his family, it may be proper to mention of what members that body was composed, and what has been their destination.

Mrs. Bannister, after performing for so many years all the duties of a wife, a mother, and a friend, was still as unaffected, as simple in manners, as gentle in disposition, as when she was Miss Harper. Time had made no inroads upon her temper ; her spirits, gently sustained, but never violent or extravagant, remained undiminished, and her attentions were always rendered in the most bland and affectionate, but unostentatious manner. To see her the solace of his infirmities, the companion of his walks, the ornament of his table, and the kind and assiduous friend who supplied to him, unobserved by others, a thousand little though important aids in society, was sufficient to impart hope and confidence to those who, having married early, might look forward to the day when they should want such comfort, and to make those who had attained an advanced period of life unmarried, regret the apathy or the selfishness which had cut off from their declining years the honours and the comforts which flow from a virtuous union.

Bannister's eldest son was named John : an allu-

sion is made to him in one of the letters already presented to the reader. He was an officer in the navy, and now resides at Exeter. To him, as I shall mention hereafter, his father paid several visits in his latter years, and always spoke of him, his wife and family, with paternal delight.

His second son, Charles, is an eminent solicitor in Lincoln's Inn, a married man with nine children. For reasons, which a moment's reflection will render obvious, I shall abstain from expressing the opinions I entertain of Mr. Charles Bannister: his general estimation in his profession needs no comment; but among the few papers which I find in the handwriting of his father, I have one which I think particularly interesting, as it demonstrates an honest parental pride, mixed with the best of feelings. On the 9th of December 1832, for he has dated it, Bannister transcribed the first Psalm, and added by way of note, "I never read this without thinking of my dear son Charles, to whom the first four verses are so applicable." At all times, and on all occasions, he mentions his son Charles with similar expressions of exultation in his merits, praises of his conduct, and prayers for the health and prosperity of him and his children.

I may mention here, that in no period of Bannister's life did the duties of his profession, the clamours of fame, or the blandishments of pleasure,

obliterate from his heart the sentiments of genuine and unaffected piety. When his health would permit he was regular in his attention to his religious duties, and in the solitude of his confinement, he wrote passages from the Holy Scriptures on the blessing of a virtuous wife and family, and the shortness of human life, with reflections extremely pious and well expressed on the loss of a dear and amiable friend. These collections and effusions would not by themselves establish his character as a religious man, but they afford striking evidence that he was not hardened by the enjoyment of good, irritated by the feeling of pain, or soothed by the consciousness that he was a lover of justice and a dispenser of charity, into a forgetfulness of that great Being to whom he owed all he enjoyed, and whose especial grace alone could rightly enable him to think justly or to act properly.

His eldest daughter, Elizabeth, (I do not give the date of her birth, for sometimes ladies do not like it,) was married to Stephen Morgan, Esq. a Russian merchant, who has now retired, and they live in opulence and happiness, blessed with five children.

Rosina, the second daughter of Bannister, married William Gelston, Esq. a captain in the East India Company's service. Providence has blessed his industry with an ample fortune : they have no children.

His third daughter, Ann, was the wife of John Eieke, Esq.; they are both deceased, leaving two sons and two daughters. The sons were twins, and their birth was fatal to Mrs. Eieke. She died at Madeira. The children, well provided for, were consigned to the care of their grandfather; one of the sons is dead, the other children still remain, so far as it is required, under that of his widow. On occasion of an illness which attacked one of the sons, Bannister makes the following memorandum: "Little Eieke was to have returned to-morrow to school, where he is anxious to go, in the hope of obtaining a prize, but it is the opinion of the medical gentleman who attends him, that he had better remain at home a few days longer. He has been well attended to by a good and faithful and kind-hearted creature, whose name is Scott, and who lived with his mother at his birth. When his mother died, she accompanied Fanny, John, and Mr. Eieke (their father), to Madeira, where Mr. Eieke soon after died. She now resides with us, where I hope she will remain all her life. The children love her dearly, and our whole family are much attached to her for her many amiable qualities."

Fanny, Bannister's fourth daughter, married Major Rotton, of the 11th Light Dragoons. He is the son of Colonel Rotton, and brother of Bannister's old friend the comedian, Richard Rotton, who,

assuming a profession in which he might be seriously wounded by a missile so slight as a pun or an equivocal on his name, calling himself Wroughton. The Major is now serving in India, but expected soon to return and enjoy in retirement the fruits of his long service, cheered by his wife and children.

On the manner in which his children were nurtured and educated, I transcribe one of Bannister's memorandums, made in 1825, displaying an affectionate pride in them, and rendering a just tribute of approbation and love to their mother. "I have lately read," he says, "a clever little book called 'An Abridgment of the Arts and Sciences,' by R. Turner, jun. LL.D. At the head of the first chapter are the following lines, which should be written in the heart of every parent.

" ' Be particular not to neglect religion in the education of your children. In vain will you endeavour to conduct them by any other path. If they are dear to you, if you expect from them credit and comfort, from religion must be derived their happiness and your own.'—FATHER GARDIL.

"Fortunate in a wife who has never failed to inculcate this sentiment in our family, I have lived to see the good effects of it illustrated in my children."

Of Bannister's sister Jane, and her husband Mr. Swendall, their affection and their care of him, enough has already been mentioned.

Seeing all these virtuous and respectable persons around me, can it be wondered at, that I feel an extraordinary interest in the fame of him whose Memoirs I am now nearly concluding? I have had the unusual gratification of knowing five generations of the same family. Charles Bannister was the companion and delight of my early days. In my subsequent intercourse with his son, I became acquainted with his children and grand-children, and I once saw, in arms, a little girl, the daughter of one of his grand-daughters.

“To save life’s flame from wasting by repose” was, after his retirement, Bannister’s principal care; but his repose was not stagnation, and the flame which was to be preserved was not damped into dimness or shaded into obscurity; it was only protected against the injuries of too much agitation. His affections were amply engaged on his amiable family, and in his casual or ordinary intercourse with the world his benevolence never forsook him, nor was the grateful return it merited ever withheld. When he walked out for his daily exercise, every eye was directed toward him with joyous recognition: those who knew him only in public life, pronounced his name with signs of agreeable recollection, those who had the happiness of a nearer acquaintance always had their greeting returned with cordiality, and their attendance on his slow steps, if

they accompanied him for a short distance, repaid with an amusing anecdote, an agreeable reminiscence, a joke, or a pun ; toward him the hand of poverty was stretched out with the confident expectation of that which invariably followed, a benevolent supply ; and when, as it often happened, fatigue came over him before he reached his home, happy was the tradesman whose house afforded him a shelter ; his gaiety, facetiousness, and attention to all who presented themselves, fathers, mothers, and children, left subjects of discourse and agreeable recollections for many days after his visit.

Sometimes he would make an unexpected call on a friend. I have seen him on such occasions full of vivacity, and with all the spirit of his early days telling a story, reciting a portion of some favourite character, giving imitations of some of his early contemporaries, or singing one or two of his best and most humorous songs. I remember one of those visits, when, finding me at home, he presented me his portrait, with the kindest expressions, delivered in a tone and with gestures which I can never forget.

It has already appeared how much men eminent for wit and talent loved his company, and how desirous they were of introducing him into the society of persons of high rank. No one could better merit such distinction. The manners of Ban-

nister were those of a perfect gentleman, equally remote from the apish affectation of overstrained refinement, and the coarse out-breaking of innate vulgarity ; his observations were well timed and unobtrusive ; his anecdotes pointed and always *à propos* ; his imitation, recitation, or song was never obtruded, but always readily granted when required.

I have mentioned that his voice was not of a quality to reach the heights, or gain the renown of fine singing, but for all convivial purposes and comic expression, its powers were amply sufficient. It never failed in anything he attempted ; but the charm of his song, as of his dialogue, was in that accurate enunciation of his forcible points, that clear and strong, yet unaffected articulation of every word, which conveyed its full spirit and meaning to the mind of the hearer.

I have before me a ballad written by Captain Morris, the oldest convivial song writer of our times, and, I should hardly scruple to say, the best of any times, given, I believe, only to Bannister. I never saw it in print, or indeed any copy of it but that which is now to be transcribed. When the reader recollects that its author, more than fifty years ago, produced those convivial, satirical, and political effusions which formed the delight of the circle in which was comprehended the Prince of Wales, then in the

meridian of his days, with the illustrious band of wits who formed his society ; when he recollects that the renown of his talents drew from the elegant and accomplished Duchess of Devonshire a request that he would oblige her by writing a song peculiarly for the ladies, and that her grace's request was answered almost immediately by the composition of that unrivalled lyric, " Though Bacchus may boast of his care-killing bowl," he will not feel displeased by the insertion of the song in this place. And should these pages meet the eye of the veteran poet, I am sure he will not be dissatisfied with the memorandum which records his friendly regard for Jack Bannister.

" Then here goes a ditty, as well as I can,
From a rustier pipe than the pipe of old Pan ;
My muse is soon ready, but Fate, you must know,
To the wing of the hawk gave the voice of the crow ;
However, I 'll croak on as well as I am able,
I 'm never behind in the revels and joys ;
And if I can wake better things at the table,
I 've croak'd to some tune, and you 'll pardon my noise.

An't the piping times come ? Peace her blessing has brought,—
I 'm willing to think so, though many think nought ;
But howe'er the world runs, 'tis alike to my song,
For my piping time has been all my life long :
In all turns of Fate I ne'er moped like a booby,
In good luck, or bad luck, my song ever rose ;
And if I had a chorus and glass of the ruby,
I left the good world to go round as it chose.

Still mirth was my motive and love was my theme,
 That soul-cheering charm of life's wearisome dream :
 Without it, oh ! what hath existence to give
 To brighten the earth, or tempt mortals to live ?
 To wake in the breast the sweet source of its pleasures,
 Still freshen'd my fancy and prompted my pen ;
 And as in my heart I 'd a key of these treasures,
 My joy was to open and open again.

To wake the sweet vision with spirit and zest,
 I'm still ever ready, and still do my best ;
 But, alas ! in the service of mirth I'm more slow
 Than I was, my good friends, fifty summers ago :—
 However, my winter don't come in a hurry,
 A sip and a song keep away skin and grief ;
 Whenever old Care tries to torture and worry,
 I snatch up my pen and he's off like a thief.

And now let me hope that some neighbour here placed
 Will restore the jarr'd nerves to their touch and their tone,
 Will stop my hoarse croaking with music and taste,
 And add a sweet pipe to my rumbling drone.
 No doubt but some sprightly assistant will follow,
 For pleasure's our end and we're all in the chase :
 I think I perceive him—I'll give the view holla !
 Tally ho !——for a song from that good-humour'd face."

To vary the scenes of life and to pursue health,
 that blessing which daily fled further and further
 from him, Bannister made occasional migrations—
 they will hardly bear the name of tours, much less
 of travels—during the remaining years of his life.

In 1818 he went to Holland, and, for the first

time that I have been able to discover, drew up a short diary of his proceeding. It is only interesting as the production of a quiet, unpretending, and unpractised traveller. In the first page I find a careful and useful memorandum of the property detached from his person, such as his portmanteaus and great coats, which he was to recollect on all occasions. He merely states, without description of place, or affectation of anecdote, his voyage from London to Rotterdam, and thence to Bruges, and home again by Ostend. In the course of his trip, which lasted a month, from the 14th of August to the 12th of September, he was most particularly struck with the inestimable productions of Reubens, Rembrandt, Wouvermans, Berghem, and other great painters, which were presented to his view in the different towns. He speaks of these with the feeling of an artist. He attended both at the Dutch and French theatres, and mentions, with pleasure, a comedy called "*Les deux Freres et les deux Mots.*" In some respects, his journal betrays the surprise which an Englishman, disguise it how he will, is sure to feel, when plunged for the first or second time into the sea of foreign society. Thus he mentions, as if it were strange, that in an hotel at Amsterdam the waiters all spoke Dutch. Let him alone laugh at this, who can say that when

he first landed at Calais or Boulogne, he heard with perfect composure the beggars and the children speaking to him and to each other in French.

With the true patriotic feeling which ever belonged to him, Bannister visited the scene of Britain's glory and Europe's deliverance, the field of Waterloo. Only three years had then elapsed since the signal event which must render it celebrated in all ages.

His next journey was, in July 1825, into Devonshire, to visit his son John. His diary, the keeping of which he renewed on this occasion, is replete with expressions of paternal kindness, joyous exultation in the health and happiness of his son's young family, and frequent thanks to the Giver of all good things for the blessings which he sees bestowed among persons to whom he is so cordially attached.

In another respect, this diary presents much amusement ; it shows us, in natural and unpremeditated narrative, the small miseries which beset a wandering cockney, who ventures to such distance from "the sweet shady side of Pall-Mall." Soon after his arrival, he says, "I am now so accustomed to the noise of rats and mice, that when I get to London, I am apprehensive I shall not be able to sleep without such accompaniments ; but I shall never be reconciled to fleas ! The harvest-bug and

gnat torment me sorely too : wicked tormentors of my too irritable skin !”

Had Bannister been endowed with the gift of poetry, his conflicts with insects, put into mock heroics, might have placed his name very high among bards of that class. “Still annoyed,” he says, “by fleas, flies, gnats, and wasps ; and last night a cock-chafer went whack against my nose, hard enough to swell the tip.” On another occasion he rises toward poetic expression. “I am the sport of fleas and flies ! Domitian killed flies for his amusement ; a great part of my employment, during the day, is killing flies, fleas, gnats, and wasps in self-defence ; surely my conduct, compared with the Roman Emperor, is more justifiable. I like to kill a wasp, but would rather be stung than hurt a bee.”

I shall conclude this portion of the subject, perhaps already treated too much at large, by two hints to cockneys who long to rusticate. Pennyroyal, sewed in a bag, is, as Bannister found on experiment, no protection against fleas. “I have often wished,” he says, “to pass some time at a farm house ; but now, living in one, and finding that poultry produces fleas, I am cured of the propensity.”

I conclude the history of this excursion with his description of a rural walk. “This was the day of the ‘Christening of little Charley ;’ the appointed

time at the church, eleven; the car-driver ordered to be at the door at a quarter past ten. He did not keep his promise, so we sallied forth, hoping to meet him on his way; he took a different road and we missed him. The weather intensely hot. Young Mrs. B., John B., little B., the fat nurse and old waddling Jack, went smoking along for an hour and a half, up hill and down, treading in ruts, kicking against stones, swallowing dust, bitten by flies, and stepping in cow-dung, till we reached the church, where the parson had waited for us some time.

“‘Who are the godfathers and godmothers?’ ‘Here in me—I answer for three; myself one, my son Charles another, and Mrs. Bannister, sen. the third.’ And thus I stood for three when I was hardly able to stand at all. The child looked beautiful, adorned in all that Kitty had sent him. He conveniently slept till the parson took him, and then stretched out his little arms and showed the dimple in his left cheek. ‘The ceremony was interesting, and ended pleasingly. We were very snug, our whole party consisting of ourselves, the tall thin clergyman, a short fat clerk, and a meagre old woman. The parson was asked to dine with us, but he was obliged to decline the invitation, having a cart waiting to take him to some friends. There is but one car at Brenton, and that came to the church-door for us on our quitting it.’”

In May 1826, Bannister renewed his visit to his son John, who then resided at Ross, but his health was very bad; he was beset with gout, and had an apprehension of cholera. Nights without rest, and meals without appetite, are the constant subjects of his narrative.

From the account of these two excursions, I select with pleasure some passages which display his feelings on religious subjects.

“My carcase,” he says, “will not bear jolting to-day;—too weak to go to church—must read my prayer-book at home.—Prayers from the heart, I trust and hope, are as acceptable to God as those uttered in a cathedral.”

That this sentiment did not proceed from presumption is shown by his general punctuality in attending divine service, and agreeably displayed in entries which he made at Ross.

“June 2nd, Confirmation day.—The church was crowded with young women and young men. The prayers were uncommonly well read. After the prayers, the Bishop of Hereford addressed the congregation in a very interesting manner; the impression was rendered stronger by his great age and energy. The Rector of Ross, whose name is Underwood, was the clergyman who read the service. According to my idea, it could not be read in a superior manner. Such articulation, modula-

tion, feeling, piety, and natural expression, I have seldom witnessed."

His next excursion was to Paris in 1827. It occupied about a month, and he was accompanied by Mrs. Bannister. The journey of an English invalid to the French capital affords no novelty of incident or remark. Bannister took the usual routine, the Louvre, the Luxembourg, Pere la Chaise, the theatres and the opera, the public buildings, with Notre Dame and the Protestant church on Sundays.

Fearful of an assault from his enemy, the gout, he took a letter of introduction to Dr. Morgan, who would have been, no doubt, a valuable ally ; but the attack was only a skirmish with the rheumatism, and that he coped with unassisted. He reached home without any serious malady, but some melancholy memorandums show that the inconveniences formed a weighty counterpoise to the pleasures of his journey. "On my arrival at Boulogne," he says, "I felt the unpleasant effects of travelling all night, packed closely up in a diligence. I could scarcely put my feet to the ground,—the stones would not allow of my walking much." He had before said, "I grow too old for long journeys, and I think this will be the last. I am at present in a very crazy state."

Such were his evening's reflections when op-

pressed with pain, fatigue, and apprehension of a fit of gout at a distance from his domestic resources ; but his never-failing spirits revived with the morning. “ I am all the better,” he says, “ for an excellent night’s rest. Rose greatly recovered ; my feet improved.—Went into the fish-market.” He travelled immediately after thus expressing himself from Boulogne to Calais, in a stage-coach, and on his arrival says, “ I never passed a much pleasanter day ; it was rendered so by the apprehension I had felt of being totally disabled from proceeding to England, and finding myself as well as when I left London. Happy contrast !”

Still he could not enjoy a walk on the ramparts, but concludes his diary with a reflection in which whim mingles with melancholy. “ Long walks, without resting occasionally, are certain to produce weakness in my legs and feet. I am a weak fellow from top to toe.”

Notwithstanding the inconveniences he experienced in these excursions, I find him in the following summer making trips to Exeter and to Boulogne. These exertions will not surprise those who know how cheerfully men rush upon fatigue to avoid the pressure of *ennui*.

His first journey was to visit his son John, who had taken a house in Exeter ; his stay was but short, as he proceeded after a fortnight to Holwell,

near Ashburton, where a brother of Mrs. Bannister had lately died. He returned by Bath; almost every day was rainy, but he was continually kept in fear or in pain by the gout. For the benefit of aged cockneys, who like Falstaff, on his death-bed, "babble of green fields," and fancy that a country life is one of pure and unmingled blessedness, I transcribe one of his memorandums.

"I have lived too long in London from early life to the present time, to like the country much: you cannot shake off old habits and acquire new ones. I must die (please God!) where I have lived so long. Kemble once said to me, 'Depend on it, Jack, when you pass Hyde Park Corner, you leave your comforts behind you.' *Experientia docet!* London for beef, fish, poultry, vegetables too; in the country you get ewe-mutton, cow-beef, and in general very indifferent veal. London is the great market of England. Why? Because it abounds in customers; and I believe you may live as cheap in London, and nobody know anything about you, as anywhere else. London is your best retirement, after long industry and labour. I delight in the country occasionally."

Perhaps when he wrote this, his spirits were depressed by a season in which St. Swithin had fully vindicated his rights, as he frequently complains of moping in the house, while heavy showers were

descending, and quotes the lines of his friend Captain Morris.

“ Crawling from window to window to see
A hog on a dunghill, a crow on a tree.”

He had for a companion when he went to Boulogne in October, his old and ingenious friend, Mr. Heath, the eminent engraver. In three weeks he returned to London. His tour exhibits him in his usual good humour, eager after rational amusement, and although beset with pains, open to all the enjoyments of society, and struck with every charm of novelty. He described, with the interest produced by surprise, the ceremony of blessing the herring fishery, when a crucifix was planted at the top of a pole in the sea, and its waves sanctified by sprinkling them with holy water from a brush with a silver handle. In speaking of this ceremony Bannister uses no contemptuous or ludicrous expression; but if thinking heretics are to be recalled into the bosom of the Catholic Church, it must be by means very different from such an exhibition.

He did not forget the theatre, but went several times; “ I saw,” he says, “ at the *Salle des Spectacles*, a piece called, ‘ *Avant, pendant, et après.*’

“ DISTRIBUTION.

“ Première époque, en 1787.
Seconde époque, en 1793.
Troisième époque, en 1828.

An actor of the name of Dumas, very clever, and a female called Gautier. I was very much pleased with the whole performance."

Poor Mr. Heath met with an accident or two, which rather cause smiles than alarm ; but he seems to have cheered the hours of his old friend and companion by unwearied kindness, and among other traits of his obliging disposition, Bannister says, "Heath amuses himself occasionally by drawing heads in pencil, which are to be mine : they are charmingly done."

In this, as in some of his former excursions, Bannister displays much of the humour of a boy at school, who undervalues everything in comparison with home. He longs to exchange his *vin ordinaire* for delicious English table-beer, and enjoys like an epicure his return to ox-tail soup : "his appetites," like those of Hal, "were not princely begot."

His esteemed friend, Heath, again accompanied him, in September 1829, to Brighton, where he remained only a week.

In April 1830, he passed a similar period at Goodrest Park with his son-in-law Stephen Morgan, Esq. and his daughter Elizabeth. The beauties of this place made him term it a paradise, and the cordial affection with which he was entertained caused him to quit it with regret, and with a wish that his first visit should not be his last.

Nor was it ; for in June 1832, he went again to Goodrest, and stayed a week, enjoying the country, amused with the occupations of the rustics, and interested by every circumstance in the passing scene. The impression made on his mind may be gathered from his valedictory sentence. “ I leave Reading to-day (please God !) and, with the exception of a cold, I have passed my time very pleasantly. Morgan was everything I could wish, and my kind-hearted daughter treated me most affectionately. God bless them and their family !”

It would be most unjust to suppose that in noting these migrations, I have had it in view to interest the reader in Bannister's achievements or observations as a traveller. “ There was no such stuff in my thoughts ;” but recollecting him as I do, and as many of my readers may—remembering him as I have attempted to pourtray him, the exhilarating promoter of mirth in his public capacity, and having known him, in the same degree, the joy, the spirit, the animating centre of private society, I have felt, and I hope the reader will participate in the sentiment, a true satisfaction in following him through these scenes. My favourable opinions of him are greatly heightened when I see him, although struggling against encroaching disease, the martyr of daily anguish, maintaining his temper unruffled, his benevolence unchilled. I

feel true delight in observing him, under such circumstances, open to every accession of pleasure, grateful for every indication of attention ; bland in his manners, liberal in his opinions, overflowing with kindness to his friends and with affection toward his relatives ; performing without rigour or ostentation all his duties, social, moral, and religious.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Bannister receives information that he is heir to an estate.—His account of his family.—The information a mistake, arising probably from the other player of the same name.—Increasing malady in 1829 and 1830.—His reflections on his advancing age.—His regret at the death of his friends,—Joseph Major,—Mr. Nield,—Sir Thomas Lawrence;—his observations on that great artist.—Munden;—anecdote of him and Bannister—their prudence—their meeting in the West of England—their respective talents in society—their imitations of King George the Third.—Death of Mr. Heath,—Mr. Becket,—Mathews.—Bannister's reflections;—his vivacity.—Death of Jack Taylor.—Bannister's health continues to decline,—he shows evident signs of decay.—His benevolence and good humour still continue.—He goes to Tunbridge Wells and Hastings.—His kindness toward the author of this work.—His decline becomes more and more evident.—He visits the Earl of Egremont at Petworth.—Returns very ill;—goes to Brighton,—his recovery hopeless. The death of George Colman—concealed from him.—Death of Bannister—his religious preparation.—His funeral.—General observations on his character, public and private.

AT a late period in his life, Bannister received information that he was heir to an estate in Cumberland. It proved to be a mistake; but I transcribe his account of the matter from his diary.

“November 29th, 1828, dined at Heath's: on my return at ten o'clock, found the following letter:

“ ‘DEAR SIR,

“ ‘The enclosed letter was just now put into my hands by Mr. Gregson, who says he received it from Henry Gaitskell, a most respectable solicitor at Egremont, in Cumberland, and thinks that you must be the nearest relation. I stated the difference in spelling the name, which he says is nothing, and may be an error of his client. At all events, it can do no harm, and it may be worth the inquiry. Henry Gaitskell was brought up in Messrs. Gregsons’ office in London.

“ ‘&c. &c. &c.

D. M.’

(COPY.) “ ‘MESSRS. GREGSON, ETC. ETC.

“ ‘GENTLEMEN,

“ ‘Mr. William Banister, who was born in or near Bewcastle, near Carlisle on the Border, died here the other day, intestate and without issue, possessed of several houses in fee-simple. His housekeeper, who is a relation, relates that Mr. William Banister often told her, that he had no heir of his father’s blood in his own country, but that Mr. John Bannister of Drury Lane, who has amused us so often, was his heir. He used to call him ‘our John,’ when named in the papers. Mr. William Banister was a very shrewd intelligent man, and, in my opinion, not likely to draw a wrong conclusion on such a

subject, for the law of descents is very well understood among country people. The grandfather of Mr. William Banister I understand to be the common ancestor. There are several maternal relations, but none nearer than cousins. I shall be obliged by your forwarding this to Mr. Bannister, and if you or he will give his relationship, I will make the necessary claims. There is some personality.

“ ‘ I am, dear Sir,

“ ‘ HENRY GAITSKELL.’

“ ‘ Egremont, 26th November, 1828.’

“ I should think my grandfather Bannister has been dead sixty-two or sixty-three years. My grandmother’s maiden name was Powell, and she married a Bannister whose name I believe was John. I cannot tell the date of their marriage, but my father, Charles Bannister, was born at Newland in Gloucestershire on the 4th of June 1740 ; and probably, from what I gathered respecting my grandfather, he died two or three years after I was born, which was at Deptford, in Kent, at a place called the Red-house, where the victualling office now stands. I was born on the 12th of May 1760. My grandfather had a place in the victualling office, and my father also. Soon after my birth, my father went on the stage, and I am the ‘ John’ mentioned by the housekeeper of Mr. William Banister of

Carlisle. I cannot tell when my grandfather was born, but have often heard my grandmother mention him. My father was an only son."

Had I possessed at an earlier period this document, some of the information it contains would have formed a part of my first chapter instead of my last. The details relating to Bannister's family would then have been in their proper place. It may be observed, that old William Banister, when he speaks of "our John," and mentions his being a player at Drury Lane, alluded, most probably, to the other Bannister mentioned in the first chapter. It does not appear that the family in Cumberland maintained any correspondence with him, and as the old gentleman continued year after year to see the same name in the newspapers, he concluded it was the same person, and spoke of him accordingly.

Although Bannister, as his duty obliged him, caused the proper inquiries to be made, he can hardly be said to have been disappointed in the result; for two days after his attention was first called to it (1st December), he declared he "did not think it would come to anything."

From the year 1829, the gout gained confirmed hold, and made continual inroads on his constitution; yet his firmness was never shaken, nor his kindness diminished. His entries in November and December are, "Gout, gout, gout; ditto, ditto, ditto;

nothing but gout ! Gout increasing ; an indifferent day and worse night ; gout increasing and pains spreading." On the 24th of December, he observes with regret, that there is no hope of being able to preside at his table on Christmas day ; but his memorandum of that day describes an assemblage of his family, his sister and her husband, his own children and grand-children. He was confined to his bed-room, but the party made him occasional visits ; he enjoyed their happiness, and relates with pleasure that " they kept it up cheerfully till half-past twelve o'clock."

Before the end of the year, he expresses his thanks to Almighty God, that his health mends and his appetite returns. But still, in the early part of 1830, he was attacked by a new symptom of disease, a soreness in his leg, which prevented him from putting his foot to the ground. The pain was mitigated and the inconvenience diminished by the skill and care of Mr. Cartwright his surgeon ; the soreness disappeared, but returned at a subsequent period.

It is not intended to make a detailed repetition of all the circumstances of Bannister's maladies, but merely to state, that in the last six years of his life, the removal of pain, rather than the acquisition of pleasure, was the extent of his hope ; for that he travelled or he remained at home, and his walks,

his meals, his recreation, and his repose were always pursued under a fear of illness that might ensue, or the hope of gaining a respite from his sufferings.

As his years fled, he felt with due sensibility, but without repining, all the inevitable consequences of age. Some of his remarks are worthy of being cited, both for their general justness, and in making out the portrait of the individual, to show that active spirit and genuine kindness which time and illness could not destroy, or even diminish.

On the 6th of August 1828, he says, "I saw here" (at Exeter) "an old acquaintance of my wife," (Mrs. James,) "a very entertaining old lady, who had been in early life very pretty, which I can perfectly recollect. To those who have lived long, it affords a pensive pleasure to see in age the remains of that beauty which was once generally acknowledged. She is a kind-hearted, elegant old lady, whose countenance is the index of her mind."

On the 12th of May 1831, he writes, "I am this day seventy-one. God has been kind to me in granting me health, strength, and good spirits to bustle successfully through life so far, to an age which thousands never attain; and I am most grateful to the Omnipotent, not only on my own account, but for the blessings bestowed in a good wife and a dutiful and affectionate family." On this passage I may remark that his jubilees were always kindly recollected.

I have already given Mr. Massingham's note on the fiftieth anniversary of his dramatic life, and on that of his matrimonial felicity, he declined the ostentation of a meeting of friends ; but many (I was among the number) sent warm congratulations.

Again in his characteristic manner, he says, " My *heel* is *healing*. Heath, my constant and attached friend, calls every morning, let the weather be what it may. My old friends nearly all stick to me, although I have nearly outlived them. The greatest tax on old age is the loss of those we love."

He received about the same time an intimation in one of the newspapers (the Morning Herald, I believe,) that of all the original performers in " The Critic," he was the only survivor.

Another intimation, which, although it originated probably in mistake, gave him some pain, was contained in a Sunday newspaper called *The Age*. His death was positively announced, and an account given of his theatrical life, his talents and merits. His feelings were soothed by a kind and good-humoured quotation, from the pen of Mr. Sidebottom.

" Few men so blest as you, to know,
That though you died *an age* ago,
You've lived another *age* to see
Emblem of immortality."

Melancholy indeed it is to those who proceed far

in the journey of life to observe that the jocund and beloved countenances which at the beginning thronged around them are dismally thinned off by death, and that every year increases the defalcation. Bannister's remark on the subject strikes me with peculiar force, when I recollect, that in the short time since I began to collect materials for these volumes, four persons, who I had flattered myself would peruse some passages with pleasure, have been removed from among us. I allude to the Duchess of St. Albans, the Earl of Egremont, the learned and estimable Dr. Cooke of Gower Street, whose acquaintance I owe to Bannister's introduction, and the kind-hearted and affectionate Mrs. Bland, who, in spite of age and infirmity, always retained a feeling regard for her old theatrical suitor, and always inquired for him in his own name, whether he came to her recollection as *La Gloire*, *Sadi*, *Walter*, or *Shacaback*. Even since this paragraph was written, and while the sheets were passing through the press, I have to add to the list the name of Thomas Morton, the parent of the never-to-be-forgotten *Walter*.

I shall show by a few of his memorandums how Bannister felt and recorded the loss of his old friends, pursuing the order of time only.

On the 20th of December 1828, he says of Joseph Major, the musician, whom so many knew and

whom no one disliked, "Major, whom I saw to-day, is dangerously afflicted with dropsy. He is of opinion that he shall never quit his house more. He has dined with me on Christmas-day for thirty-eight years." The fear was verified by the event; he died very soon afterward. In the character of Joseph Major there was much that was extraordinary and original. Against the remonstrances and even the injunctions of his family, he followed the bent of his genius, and made himself by perseverance a very good musician. He gained considerable emolument as a teacher of the pianoforte, and was the composer of a few agreeable melodies. He had a warm and affectionate heart, and was to an extraordinary degree devoted to those whom he considered his friends. The number of these might be carried to a considerable amount, but it will suffice to name two. One was the late R. J. Stevens, who will ever be remembered until ladies shall "sigh no more." This eminent composer and musician had a great respect for the abilities of Major, who in return regarded him with unbounded veneration. For Incledon Major entertained sentiments of personal esteem mingled with the greatest admiration of his talents: he was his companion in his professional excursions, and while his musical skill contributed to the success of his performances, his care and assiduity smoothed his toils and promoted his

comforts. For Bannister Major entertained sentiments of warm regard, mixed with a genuine respect for his virtues and good qualities. When poor Major died many had to lament the loss of a kind friend and pleasant associate, but not one had reason to feel that he was freed from a bitter opponent or a rancorous enemy."

The day after he made the note last extracted, Bannister returned to a similar subject. "My old friend Nield died at six o'clock yesterday evening. I had known him above forty years." He is often mentioned in terms of affection when Bannister is writing of his parties, his visits, and his travels.

In the admiration generally attached to the name of Sir Thomas Lawrence, Bannister took his full share. In one of his diaries, 29th August 1828, he says, "Called yesterday on Sir Thomas Lawrence, — he saw me, and was remarkably kind, and requested I would call often, as he was always at home. What a magnificent artist!"

Too soon afterward, (every one who feels a zeal for the arts and for the honour of his country will adopt the expression,) too soon afterward, Bannister had to record his definitive separation from this honoured and illustrious person. He says, "I have just heard with the most sincere regret that Sir Thomas Lawrence died last night (January the 7th)—this is a thunder-stroke to the arts! He was

a most amiable and valuable character, an artist admired by all the world who knew anything of painting. The situation of President of the Royal Academy was ably sustained by this great man, and his loss will be severely felt for years to come. He has left a most valuable collection of statues, superb drawings by the old masters, and many other things, independently of his own unrivalled works to render him glorious to posterity. God rest his soul! *Sic transit gloria mundi!* I am grieved to begin this eighth of January with so melancholy a memorandum. I knew him from boyhood. I recollect that, when very young, he made drawings at Bath at half a guinea a head, and I believe he had, for some years past, five hundred guineas for a whole length.

“The loss of Sir Thomas will be greatly felt by one of the greatest and best men on earth, — I mean King George the Fourth. God bless him! I must add the following quotation, applied to Sir Thomas Lawrence, from Shakspeare :

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that nature might stand up
And say to all the world, ‘ This was a man ! ’ ”

In 1832, he had to regret the loss of his friend, fellow-labourer, and, in some respects, competitor, Munden. In using the word competitor I am not to be understood as saying that they performed the same characters at rival theatres, or were placed as

antagonists in any comic piece. Their rivalry was of a more general and less personal description ; they sought and shared between them the applause which the public bestow on those who contribute to their amusement, but so different were their pretensions, that what was conferred on the one was never deemed to be taken away from the other.

With what eyes these two favoured comedians regarded each other, and how their respective powers contracted in social display, may be collected from the following anecdotes, which I have brought together in this place, as they show the two parties to most advantage in union and in contrast. They are taken from the memorandums of a gentleman to whom I have been indebted for much information.

Bannister and Joe Munden, as he was designated in the green-room, for many years lived as brother comedians in mutual esteem, and rendered each other friendly professional assistance. Both were in their early days sensible of the precarious nature of their source of prosperity, and therefore provident for the future. If a distinction in this respect could be drawn between them, it would be that Bannister's prudence left more ample scope to his liberality and good nature than that which was displayed by his brother comedian ; but the observation is not intended to convey any reflection on Munden, whose integrity, and plain, straight-forward dealing pro-

cured him the appellation of "honest Joe." In a contemplative mood, speaking to his friend on a moonlight night in a churchyard, he said, "When my bones are laid beneath the turf, they may allege that I made money, but they cannot charge me with rapacity or injustice; they cannot say that I was ever plaintiff or defendant in any action." When this conversation was reported to Bannister, he observed, "Just like my friend Joe; he would go an honest mile to save an honest penny, but he would not budge a single step out of the road to pick up a purse of gold. Joe was a worthy, unpretending, excellent fellow."

When they were in the country, Bannister said, they clubbed their talents by dividing them; each was able to fill a house by his own attractions, and therefore they performed separately, although they might not be far apart; the one perhaps captivating at Plymouth, while the other kept the audiences all alive at Weymouth.

On their last excursion in this quarter, when Joe had made his farewell obeisance at Plymouth, and Jack had performed the same grateful ceremony at Weymouth, and each was going to occupy the ground which the other had quitted, the stage coaches in which they were travelling met on the road, and, during a short pause, they conversed with each other, describing in brief but significant terms the

friends from whom, at each place, they might expect the kindest treatment.

Their reception and adventures in this part of the world, formed a favourite topic of narrative and description to both, and became, without design on either part, the cause of a sort of rivalry, in the memory at least, of those who heard them. Bannister, it was observed, possessed the most imagination : he was richly illustrative, interspersing his stories with lively episodes invented for the occasion, always striking and apt. Munden, without any considerable portion of his impromptu wit, compensated by his grave, dry humour, the intelligence of his eye, and the drollery of his look.

Among other pleasantries which they exhibited, but in parties extremely private, were imitations of the look, speech, and gestures of their sovereign, George the Third. In these efforts it was doubted which had the superiority. Neither attempted to make the King an object of ridicule, but each exhibited him as he was shown by Gilray in caricature engravings, which the King himself delighted to examine ; with all his peculiarities, but free from anything which could be construed into ridicule or disrespect.

In the preceding reign, the Jacobites at the Cocoa-tree engaged a player, who could mimic George the Second, regularly to attend their meetings, and to

represent the King in his tent at the battle of Dettingen, at the levee, or on the throne in the house of lords, delivering his speech, that they might enjoy the pleasure of seeing him vilified, if they could not hope for the satisfaction of seeing him dethroned. Had such a club still existed, the members would never have opened their doors to Bannister or Munden ; and if they had, they would have closed them again in anger and disappointment ; but certainly neither performer would have accepted their invitation.

When apprized of Munden's decease, which happened on the 6th of February, Bannister recorded his regret, describing him as one of the best comic actors that ever trod the stage.

With Munden, Bannister was not in such habits of daily intercourse or social intimacy as to render his loss a very sensible affliction. It left the circle of his constant associations undiminished ; but he had next to lament a privation much more close and serious. The friend of his youth, the companion of his travels, the kind-hearted individual, who, while suffering under great and grievous maladies himself, never permitted, as is already noticed, a day to pass, whatever the weather, when Bannister was ill, without presenting himself at his door to testify his friendly concern by his inquiries,—the worthy, the ingenious Mr. Heath, de-

parted this life the 15th of November 1834. It abundantly appeared, both from the conversation and the memorandums of Bannister, how dear to him was this highly valuable associate.

On what terms they lived, may appear from the following memorandums. "17th April, 1831.—Wrote to Heath on Thursday, to say I could not dine with him on his birth-day, next Tuesday. It is ridiculous, when men are going toward eighty, to celebrate births. It is pretty boys' play, but won't do in advanced years." "18th April.—Wrote to Heath, to say I would dine with him : I change like the weathercock ! He was much hurt at my refusal, and, as he is a good fellow, I could not say no." On the 19th, he records his excellent dinner, his pleasant day, the family party, and age of his inviter — seventy-four.

In another of his entries he says, (13th November, 1834,) " My dear friend Heath, who has been dangerously ill for some days past, is worse to-day ;" and, on the 16th, " Poor Heath is no more ; he died last night at half past twelve. I have lost a kind-hearted and cheerful companion. May God in heaven receive his soul !"

Pursuing his friendly solicitude to the last, he records the removal of the body from No. 18, Gower Street, the residence of his son, Mr. Serjeant Heath, to be interred at Acton.

Mr. Becket, a magistrate of the county of Middlesex, an old and valued friend, and near neighbour of Bannister, claimed a memorandum expressive of regret for his death, which occurred in June 1835.

It was immediately followed by one which he felt most deeply, that of his valued friend and sportively adopted son, Charles Mathews, which afflicting event took place on the 26th of June. It might be said of him, as Dr. Johnson had said of Garrick, that "his death diminished the gaiety of nations," and with greater truth, because more than two years before his decease, Roscius had withdrawn his powerful contribution from the treasury of national entertainment, while Mathews had never affected, nor, I believe, ever meditated a retreat, but was to the last moment of his life planning new scenes, which, had Heaven permitted, he would have added to his ample, his almost incredible contribution, to the gratification of the public.

In noticing the event, Bannister says, "One of my most valued friends, Mathews, died last Friday, in his fifty-ninth year. He was a really good fellow, and has not left many better behind. I was very much attached to him, and he knew it."

These calamities were followed by one more near to him, when four fine youths, connected with his family, were drowned in one morning. But these losses, which the lapse of years or the unexpected

visitations of Providence brought on him, although they powerfully affected his feelings, did not produce an unmanly dejection of spirits, or anything approaching to general gloom or sourness of temper.

His conversation with a friend, in which he expressed his natural regrets, without foregoing his characteristic gaiety, but which probably occurred a few years before all these causes of grief had accumulated around him, is deserving of notice.

“You may perhaps think it rather odd,” he said, “but there are few circumstances that have so strong a tendency to make me melancholy as the recollection of Foote’s theatre, for such I remember it in my early days, when in the snug corner of Suffolk Street, with just light enough in the passage to make ‘darkness visible,’ I used to go there with my father, and get my pocket well stuffed with oranges: ah! none are so sweet now! nor is the laugh so loud, or the mirth so gay. After one-legged Foote came the elder Colman, and then my esteemed friend, George Colman the younger, as he still persists in calling himself. I was Mr. Bannister, junior, and young Bannister, in those days, though now, as Squire Groom says, ‘Stiff as a turnpike.’ I (who’d have thought it?) have lived to see three generations of Tom Fools, laughing, singing, ranting, ‘strutting their hour upon the stage, then heard no more,’ while here am I, alive, and leaping, I was going to

say, but for the twinge in my heel, which reminds me that I, too, am descending into the grave. I was thinking of these things this morning, as I crept, or rather crawled along, and began to fancy myself like the wandering Jew, who had outlived I don't know how many generations. Yes, an old decrepit, wandering smouchey." Just at the moment, an Israelite passed the window, crying old clothes; he relapsed from the melancholy moralist into the Jack Bannister of the olden time, adapted his countenance to the character, and began, in exact imitation of the itinerant, to cry, "old clothes—clothes sell—clothes,"—in a tone which would have allured to their doors any servants who had to dispose of superannuated apparel. This extraordinary versatility made his old friend Jack Taylor say, that for his sudden transmutations he might be compared to the spirit of pantomime, or an ever-changing harlequinade."

In May 1832, Bannister had to record the death, at nearly fourscore, of this good-natured friend. Jack Taylor had been, for the greater portion of his life, attached to various newspapers, and was, during the period of its extreme loyalty, editor of "The Sun." He was a well-informed and most agreeable companion; his fault in conversation was, incessant punning: not that harmless explosion which ends with a single effort, but that continuous

repetition by which the subject, and too often the patience of the hearer, was completely hunted down.

While death was thus exercising his fell dominion over the friends and associates of Bannister, it was evident that his march was also directed toward him with distinct although not precipitate steps. From 1830, a diminution of his strength was observed, more by persons who met him at intervals than by those who were with him constantly. His fits of gout were less violent than they had been, but this was attributed to the diminished strength of his constitution.

In 1835 he underwent a painful crisis of considerable duration. The sore place on his leg reappeared for a short time, but he was immediately attacked by a new eruption in his other leg, of a more painful and apparently more determined character. Again were the skill and zeal of his friend, Mr. Cartwright, called upon, and he succeeded in healing the wound. But the process was long, and the sufferings of the patient very acute. From April to July he was in continual pain, for more than six weeks confined to his bed or his bed-room, and when the wound was healed his health was not restored: sleepless nights, nausea at the stomach, and a continual diminution of bodily strength, gave his friends apprehensions from which himself was altogether free. In the midst of his pains and com-

plaints, he remembered everything that was interesting to those whom he esteemed; their birth-days and other family incidents were noted in his diary, and he even mentioned his satisfaction that a day was fine, on which a servant who, to his regret, had quitted him, was to go to his friends in Herefordshire, and that the 1st of May was bad weather, to the disadvantage of the chimney-sweepers. Trifling indeed are these things, as matters of biographical record; but as samples of the mind, they are more effective than planned scenes or laboured declamations. On his birth-day, which was also that of his sister, he thanked the Almighty for having permitted him to live seventy-five years.

As soon as he became convalescent, he took the course usual with town patients, enforced by the advice of Mr. Cartwright, of seeking health at the sea-side. On the 6th of July he reached Tunbridge Wells, and on the following day arrived at Hastings. Here he was soon joined by Mrs. Bannister, his grand-daughter Miss Eicke, and her brother. He made some progress in improving his health, but the weather was intensely hot, the want of rain quite an afflictive calamity; and after an absence of about seven weeks he returned to Gower Street, with the hope that he had derived great benefit from his tour.

To me the recollection of this journey is parti-

cularly endeared by a letter which I received from him before the arrival of his family; a letter so grateful to my feelings and so demonstrative of the sentiments he entertained for me, that, fearless of censure, I insert it. At our parting interview, I had asked him to inform me of the state of his health. He says,—

“Marine Hotel, Hastings, July 8th, 1835.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,

“The pleasing tone is in my ear which made its way to my heart, when you requested a line from me on my arrival at Hastings. I am, thank God, considerably better. I took more food yesterday at dinner than I have for some time, and by gulping down this delightful sea air, I feel in better spirits, enjoy symptoms of health, and hope, in due time, to shake hands with you in Gower Street.

“Pray remember me, with kindest regards, &c., and believe me,

“My dearest friend,

“Yours ever most truly,

“Till death drops the curtain,

“JOHN BANNISTER.”

Soon after his return, I was under the care of Mr. Alexander, undergoing an operation on my eyes.

It is delightful to me to find, that in his diary

Bannister constantly noted the favourable progress of my cure, and always with thanks to God, as if I had been a near relation ; and to recollect that, as soon as it could be permitted, he struggled against his infirmities, and came into my bed-room to offer his congratulations, and cheer me with the cordial expressions of his good wishes. Can it be supposed that I feel less than an affectionate, a fraternal regard, toward such a man ?

During the autumn after his return, and a portion of the winter, he continued in an apparently improved state of health, taking his walks, visiting his friends, dining out now and then, and occasionally receiving small parties of those with whom he was most intimate. Still his courage evidently exceeded his strength, and his hopes were more sanguine than his reasonable expectations could warrant. His relatives and friends watching him with anxiety and affection, saw evident signs of decay, and moderated their hopes without intermitting their attentions.

His friend the Earl of Egremont had long been pressing him to pay a visit at Petworth. On several occasions he had been unable to accept these flattering invitations, but in February 1836, being again attracted by the kindness of his noble friend, and encouraged by the society of his esteemed neighbour, Mr. Clint, the celebrated artist, he under-

took the journey. The effort was beyond his strength; the fatigue of travelling, and the exertions he could not restrain himself from making while at Petworth, overpowered him; and although all possible care and attention were employed on him by the directions of his noble host, he was obliged on the sixth day, having been absent from the 22nd to the 27th, to return home in a state calculated to occasion lively alarm.

By the affectionate care of his family, and the judicious attention of his medical advisers, he was sufficiently re-established to visit Brighton in June. I saw him there at his abode on the Marine Parade, accompanied by Mrs. Bannister and his grandchildren. He was obviously in a state of decay, his strength daily wasting and his pains increasing: yet he seemed to derive some vigour from the sea air, and enjoyed with cheerfulness, if not with hilarity, the animating scene. His illness did not produce the usual effect of querulous egotism: the only expression on the subject which I heard from him was, "Well, I see I must not attempt to play Hamlet to-night." In his morning's walk on the chain pier, he had patronized the arts by sitting to the mechanical Lawrence of the place for his profile, and he gave me one of the copies, inscribed with his name and the date, which I preserve as an endeared memorial.

In August, increasing malady, and its natural concomitant, the desire after his wonted comforts, made him return to Gower Street. He was again attended by Mr. Cartwright, who with his neighbour and valued friend, Dr. Boott, the well-known and eminent physician, did all that skill and friendship could effect; but they soon agreed that there was no prominent or tangible disease with which they could grapple; his state was one of natural decay. The powers of life were rapidly exhausting themselves, and the resources of medicine must be tried in vain. This opinion they communicated to his family, and the utmost attention, care, and kindness were constantly employed to afford comfort and ease where health was not to be expected, and where positive enjoyment was not to be attained. In this extremity, when life was sustained only by the cautious administration of brandy and water, his sportive spirit was not extinct. His friend Bartley was with him one day, when it was thought by Mrs. Bannister that he applied to his remedy rather too often. "Well, George," he said, with the greatest appearance of good humour, "I must not drink out of my turn, must I?"

The benevolent and pious solicitude of his family was shown, not merely in ministering to his personal ease and convenience, but by soothing his mind. Every recollection was excited and every

communication made which could tend to create satisfactory or pleasurable ideas, and every reflection and every disclosure calculated to cause pain was studiously avoided.

For this reason he was never permitted to learn an event which would have given to his feelings a most excruciating pang,—the death of his dear and inestimable friend, George Colman, which, as already mentioned, occurred on the 26th of October. Many passages in this work will show how sincerely they were attached to each other; from Bannister's memorandums I could add many more, but the subject does not require further proof.

Although becoming daily weaker, he was still able to sit up until the 7th of November. From one o'clock in the morning of that day he showed every appearance of approaching dissolution. He was unable to articulate, but continued sensible. He did not seem to suffer much anguish, but was restless and uneasy. At two o'clock he fell into a gentle sleep, from which he never awoke. It was soon observed that he had ceased to breathe, but the precise moment at which his dissolution took place could not be ascertained; it was not indicated by a groan, a convulsion, or any of those struggles which so frequently attend the separation of the spiritual from the corporeal part. His countenance after death displayed a sweet serenity, which seemed to express that he died at peace with God and man.

About a fortnight before his decease, he had expressed a desire to receive the holy Communion, and it was administered by a clergyman, who visited him several times afterward to impart the consolations which religion can afford, and they were not tendered in vain. After receiving the sacrament, he was perfectly happy in his mind, and resigned to the change which he was conscious speedily awaited him. Almost the last words which he distinctly uttered were, "My hope is in Christ." Blessed hope! which man is permitted to believe will never be fruitlessly entertained by those who join to a virtuous life, a pure faith and an humble spirit.

On the 14th of November his remains were conveyed to the parish church of St. Martin's in the Fields, and deposited in a vault close by those of his father.

His funeral, consistently with his feelings and manner of life, was free from everything like ostentation or pretension. His two sons and some other individuals of his family, with a limited number of his private friends, and a few of his dramatic associates, formed the attendants from Gower Street. I joined them at the church-door, and I never heard anything with more true sensibility, than I experienced in the admirable reading of the funeral service by Sir Henry Dukinfield. Nothing could

exceed the impressive solemnity with which that eminent divine delivered those beautiful passages of Christian sentiment and cheering hope which the wisdom and piety of those who founded our church have selected and set apart to inspire virtuous resolutions and practical piety, and at the same time to point out and to give assurance of their certain and imperishable reward.

My task is done; for I have not, as has too often been the practice of those who write biographical memoirs, thought fit to inquire of Mr. Bannister's relatives what were the bequests contained in his will, or the sum sworn to in taking out the probate. Nothing in either disclosure could interest the discerning reader, and I have no curiosity in myself on the subject, nor any desire to gratify that feeling in others, where nothing useful or particularly entertaining could be communicated.

So much has already been said of Bannister's character in all the periods of his public and private life, that nothing new remains to be added. His unremitting exertions in his profession will appear from the appendix, which contains a list of leading and marked characters, which, I believe, the annals of few other actors can rival. In performing the great and accumulated amount of dramatic business, he never attracted the ill-will of any one of his contemporaries. No man perhaps passed through so long a

period of theatrical life without ever incurring the displeasure of the public, or creating a feeling of resentment either in author or actor.

How truly he was beloved by his brothers of the theatre has already been noticed, with some of the obvious causes. Another may be added ; that he was never a proprietary manager. In that difficult station, however fairly and equitably a man may conduct himself, whatever may be the kindness of his heart or the suavity of his manners, it is difficult for him to exclude from the minds of the performers the notion, that they are used as mere instruments for promoting his prosperity ; that they are used to turn the mill, that he may draw the grist.

Of Bannister's great predecessor, Garrick, Goldsmith has said,—

“On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting ;

’Twas only that when he was off he was acting ;”

but Bannister, whether on or off the stage, was always the same. In the drama he was affecting, because he was natural and simple ; in society he was distinguished by the same characteristics. His unaffected hilarity in conversation, the flexibility of his mind in adapting itself to every subject which arose, and the almost puerile good humour with which he recalled and recited the incidents of his earliest life and observation, formed altogether a

picture equally singular and interesting. In these moments he showed himself to the greatest advantage; his animated countenance displayed at once the intelligence of a man, the sweetness of a woman, and the innocent sportiveness of a child.

His social virtues will never be forgotten; they assured to him the respect and esteem of all; he enjoyed upon earth the full reward of his talents and good qualities, while his hopes of an hereafter were cherished with the warmth and confidence resulting from a true and lively faith.

His example presents an useful lesson. He was famous, but never indulged in pride or presumption; prosperous, yet never hardened his heart or closed his ears against the appeals of friendship, or the cries of necessity; and as the crown of these good qualities,

“ And to add greater honours to his age
Than man could give him, he died, fearing God.”

APPENDIX.

AN ALPHABETICAL LIST OF CHARACTERS PERFORMED BY JOHN BANNISTER DURING HIS THEATRICAL LIFE OF THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS.

It must of course be understood, that this list is not put forth as perfect. It has been collected from the best information that could be given, and from the books in which dramatic proceedings are recorded, aided by a very imperfect sketch made by Bannister himself.

| <i>Character.</i> | <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Abbé | False Appearances | Drury Lane. | 1789, April 20. |
| Abbé de L'Epée | Deaf and Dumb | Birmingham. | 1801. |
| Abrahamides | The Tailors | Haymarket. | |
| Achmet | Barbarossa | Covent Gar. | 1779, Feb. 2. |
| Acres | Rivals | D. L. | 1792, Aug. 9. |
| Adam de Francton | Carnarvon Castle | D. L. | 1793, Aug. 12. |
| Addle | The Counterfeit | D. L. | 1803, March 17. |
| Aircastle | Cozeners | D. L. | 1800, Nov. 8. |
| Ali Baba | Forty Thieves | D. L. | 1805, April 8. |
| Allelack | Invisible Girl | D. L. | 1805, April 28. |
| Allworth | New Way to pay Old Debts | D. L. | 1783, Oct. 14. |
| Almaviva | The Spanish Barber | H. | 1787, Aug. 7. |
| Almaviva | Follies of a Day | H. | |
| Almorán | Kais | D. L. | 1807, Feb. 11. |
| Ambassador | King John | D. L. | |
| Antonio | Follies of a Day | D. L. | 1803, July 26. |
| Atall | Wandering Jew | D. L. | 1797, May 31. |
| Atkins | Mogul Tale | H. | 1796, Aug. 23. |
| Autolychus | Winter's Tale | D. L. | 1802, March 25. |
| Average | The Cherokee | D. L. | 1794, Dec. 20. |
| Baron Willenhurst | Of Age To-morrow | D. L. | 1800, Feb. 1. |
| Basil | Spanish Barber | H. | 1782, Aug. 27. |
| Bauldy | Gentle Shepherd | D. L. | 1802, June 8. |
| Beauclerc | Virginia | D. L. | 1800, Oct. 30. |
| Beau Clincher | Constant Couple | D. L. | 1794, May 29. |
| Beaufort | Two to One | H. | 1784, June 19. |
| Belcour | West Indian | D. L. | 1783, Jan. 15. |
| Bellmoir | The Beau's Duel | D. L. | 1785, April 11. |
| Belville | Country Girl | D. L. | 1785, Oct. 18. |
| Ben | Love for Love | D. L. | 1789, Oct. 11. |
| Ben Blunt | Circassian Bride | D. L. | 1809, Feb. 23. |
| Ben Bowsprit | Trip to the Nore | H. | 1797, Nov. 9. |
| Billy Bristle | Hunt the Slipper | D. L. | 1804, May 17. |
| Blabbo | The Caravan | D. L. | 1803, Dec. 5. |
| Blandish | The Heiress | D. L. | 1786, Jan. 14. |
| Blazio | The Pirates | Opera House. | 1792, Nov. 21. |
| Blunt | Love in many Masks | D. L. | 1790, March 8. |
| Bluntly | Next Door Neighbours | H. | 1791, July 9. |
| Bobadil | Every Man in his Humour | D. L. | 1802, Dec. 10. |
| Bowkit | The Son-in Law | D. L. | 1796, Jan. 1. |

| <i>Character.</i> | <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Bombardinian . . . | Chrononhotonthologos . . . | Haymarket. | 1788, Aug. 27. |
| Bombardo . . . | Female Duellist . . . | D. L. | 1793, May 22. |
| Bootekin . . . | English Readings . . . | H. | 1787, Aug. 4. |
| Brass . . . | Confederacy . . . | D. L. | 1788, Nov. 24. |
| Brazen . . . | Recruiting Officer . . . | H. | 1793, Nov. 16. |
| Brisk . . . | Double Dealer . . . | D. L. | 1787, Nov. 29. |
| Brother . . . | Comus . . . | D. L. | 1786, May 15. |
| Brush . . . | Clandestine Marriage . . . | D. L. | 1804, May 22. |
| Buck . . . | Englishman in Paris . . . | D. L. | 1781, May 8. |
| Buntline . . . | The Travellers . . . | D. L. | 1806, Jan 22. |
| Burly . . . | Indiscretion . . . | D. L. | 1800, May 10. |
| Butler . . . | Piety in Pattens . . . | D. L. | 1790, May 19. |
| Caleb Quotem . . . | The Review . . . | D. L. | 1804, April 23. |
| Captain Ironsides . . . | The Brothers . . . | D. L. | 1800, Nov. 4. |
| Captain Harcourt . . . | Chapter of Accidents . . . | H. | 1780, Aug. 5. |
| Careless . . . | Two Connoisseurs . . . | H. | 1784, Sep. 2. |
| Carronade . . . | Wife of Two Husbands . . . | D. L. | 1803, Nov. 1. |
| Cassio . . . | Othello . . . | D. L. | 1785, March 3. |
| Cavendish . . . | Lord Russell . . . | H. | 1784, Aug. 18. |
| Chalkstone, (Lord) . . . | Lethe . . . | D. L. | 1789, Feb. 16. |
| Chamont . . . | The Orphan . . . | D. L. | 1782, Dec. 26. |
| Charles Euston . . . | I'll tell you what . . . | H. | 1785, Aug. 4. |
| Charles . . . | Jealous Wife . . . | D. L. | 1785, June 29. |
| Charles . . . | School for Scandal . . . | H. | 1785, Sep. 2. |
| Chatillon . . . | King John . . . | D. L. | 1785, Nov. 22. |
| Chearly . . . | The Apparition . . . | H. | 1794, Sep. 3. |
| Christoval . . . | Aurelio and Miranda . . . | D. L. | 1798, Dec. 29. |
| Clement . . . | Hunt the Slipper . . . | H. | 1784, Aug. 21. |
| Clinch . . . | The Ghost . . . | H. | 1786, Aug. 26. |
| Clown . . . | All's Well that ends Well . . . | H. | 1794, Dec. 12. |
| Cockade . . . | Widow Bewitched . . . | D. L. | 1786, April 26. |
| Colonel Foible . . . | Receipt Tax . . . | H. | 1783, Aug. 13. |
| Colonel Oldboy . . . | Lionel and Clarissa . . . | D. L. | 1807, Dec. 13. |
| Colonel Feignwell . . . | Bold Stroke for a Wife . . . | H. | 1810, June 11. |
| Copper Captain . . . | Rule a Wife and have a Wife . . . | D. L. | 1799, May 14. |
| Count Valentia . . . | Child of Nature . . . | D. L. | 1795, April 16. |
| Coupee . . . | Virgin Unmasked . . . | D. L. | 1786, March 2. |
| Crape . . . | Grieving is a Folly . . . | Lyceum. | 1809, April 21. |
| Crispin . . . | The Anatomist . . . | D. L. | 1801, Dec. 19. |
| Dabble . . . | The Humourist . . . | D. L. | 1785, April 27. |
| Dactyl . . . | The Patron . . . | H. | 1781, Aug. 1. |
| Darby . . . | The Poor Soldier . . . | D. L. | 1795, May 1. |
| Dashwould . . . | Know your own Mind . . . | D. L. | 1789, April 21. |
| David . . . | The Rivals . . . | D. L. | 1795, April 24. |
| David Mowbray . . . | First Love . . . | D. L. | 1808, May 27. |
| Davy . . . | Bon Ton . . . | | |
| Delmar . . . | Modern Breakfast . . . | H. | 1790, Aug. 11. |
| Dexter . . . | The Land we live in . . . | D. L. | 1804, Dec. 29. |
| Dick . . . | Confederacy . . . | H. | 1785, June 11. |
| Dick . . . | The Apprentice . . . | H. | 1778, Aug. 27. |
| Dicky Dash . . . | Box Lobby Loungers . . . | D. L. | 1787, May 16. |
| Dicky Gossip . . . | My Grandmother . . . | D. L. | 1806, April 14. |
| Doctor Last . . . | Dr. Last's Examination . . . | D. L. | 1790, May 4. |
| Doctor Pangloss . . . | Heir at Law . . . | H. | 1804, June 13. |
| Don Sebastian . . . | School for Greybeards . . . | D. L. | 1786, Nov. 25. |
| Doodle . . . | Tom Thumb . . . | H. | 1781, Aug. 22. |
| Dorilas . . . | Cave of Trophonius . . . | D. L. | 1791, May 3. |
| Dorilas . . . | Merope . . . | D. L. | 1779, Jan. 19. |

| <i>Character.</i> | <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Douglas | Douglas | Drury Lane. | 1780, June 2. |
| Drunken Admiral . . | Assignment | D. L. | 1807, Jan. 28. |
| Dupré | Deaf and Dumb | D. L. | 1801, Jan. 24. |
| Duretète | The Inconstant | D. L. | 1798, May 7. |
| Echo | The World | D. L. | 1808, March 31. |
| Edgar | King Lear | Birmingham. | 1779. |
| Edmonds | The East Indian | H. | 1782, July 16. |
| Edward | Haunted Tower | D. L. | 1789, Nov. 24. |
| Edward | Irishman in London | D. L. | 1803, Sep. 20. |
| Ennui | The Dramatist | D. L. | 1807, May 4. |
| Etiquette | Summer Amusement | H. | 1790, Aug. 20. |
| Fabio | New Spain | H. | 1790, July 16. |
| Fabuletto | Doubtful Son | H. | 1810, July 3. |
| Falbridge | English Merchant | H. | 1781, July 18. |
| Falstaff | Henry IV. (Part I.) | Ireland. | |
| Filch | Beggar's Opera | | |
| Fisherman | Lady of the Rock | D. L. | 1805, Feb. 12. |
| Florimond | Edgar and Emmeline | D. L. | 1795, April 27. |
| Florizel | Winter's Tale | D. L. | 1785, April 18. |
| Florizel | Sheep Shearing | H. | 1783, Aug. 20. |
| Flutter | Belle's Stratagem | D. L. | 1790, Mar. 22. |
| Francis | Henry IV. (Part I.) | D. L. | 1791, Nov. 7. |
| Frank | Heigho! for a Husband | H. | 1794, Jan. 14. |
| Frank Heartall | Soldier's daughter | D. L. | 1804, Feb. 7. |
| Fustian | Common Sense | H. | 1782, Aug. 13. |
| Gaby | Every Man his Hobby | D. L. | 1792, May 20. |
| Gam | Kentish Barons | H. | 1791, June 25. |
| George Barnwell | George Barnwell | D. L. | 1787, April 30. |
| Gentleman in Balcony | Manager in Distress | H. | 1780, May 30. |
| Glib | Peep behind the Curtain | H. | 1796, Sep. 5. |
| Goldfinch | Road to Ruin | | |
| Gondibert | Battle of Hexham | H. | 1789, Aug. 11. |
| Gradus | Who's the Dupe? | D. L. | 1790, April 22. |
| Grave-digger | Hamlet | | |
| Gratiano | Merchant of Venice | H. | 1787, July 27. |
| Gregory | The Mock Doctor | H. | 1793, Dec. 10. |
| Gregory Gubbins | Battle of Hexham | H. | 1790, Aug. 31. |
| Grog | Reconciliation | D. L. | 1813, April 26. |
| Grotesque | False Colours | D. L. | 1793, April 5. |
| Hairbrain | Man of Ten Thousand | D. L. | 1796, Jan. 23. |
| Hamlet | Hamlet | D. L. | 1780, April 21. |
| Harlequin | Harlequin's Invasion | D. L. | 1786, Dec. 28. |
| Harlequin | Genius of Nonsense | H. | 1780, Sep. 2. |
| Harlequin Clack | Rival Harlequins | D. L. | 1786. |
| Harry Hawser | The Shipwreck | D. L. | 1796, Dec. 20. |
| Hartshorn | Sailor's Daughter | D. L. | 1804, April 7. |
| Henry Willwould | Children | D. L. | 1800, April 28. |
| Hilario | Chimney Corner | D. L. | 1797, Oct. 7. |
| Hippolitus | Phædra | H. | 1780, June 26. |
| Hob | Hob in the Well | D. L. | 1795, June 3. |
| Hodge | Love in a Village | H. | 1804, Sep. 12. |
| Homakin | Captive of Spilberg | D. L. | 1798, Nov. 16. |
| Horace | Beggar on Horseback | H. | 1785, June 16. |
| Howard | The Will | D. L. | 1797, April 19. |
| Humphrey Gubbins | Tender Husband | D. L. | 1802, May 17. |
| Humorous Lieutenant | The Greek Slave | D. L. | 1791, March 23. |

| <i>Character.</i> | <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Hyllus . . . | Royal Supplicants . . | Drury Lane. | 1781, Feb. 17. |
| Inkle . . . | Inkle and Yarico . . . | H. | 1787, July 7. |
| Isaac . . . | The Duenna . . . | D. L. | 1795, May 18. |
| Jack . . . | Lesson for Lawyers . . | H. | 1789, May 9. |
| Jack Connor . . . | Farce of O'Keefe's. | | |
| Jack Crotchet . . . | Box-Lobby Challenge . . | H. | 1794, Feb. 22. |
| Jack Junk . . . | The Birth-day . . . | D. L. | 1807, June 3. |
| Jack Lizard . . . | The Secret . . . | D. L. | 1799, March 2. |
| Jack Stocks . . . | The Lottery . . . | D. L. | 1783, Dec. 10. |
| Jack Volatile . . . | Country Attorney . . . | H. | 1787, July 7. |
| Jacob . . . | Chapter of Accidents . . | D. L. | 1802, June 8. |
| James . . . | Reparation . . . | D. L. | 1784, Feb. 14. |
| Jenny Diver . . . | Beggar's Opera. | | |
| Jerry Blackacre . . . | The Plain Dealer . . . | D. L. | 1796, Feb. 27. |
| Jerry Sneak . . . | The Mayor of Garrat . . | D. L. | 1791, April 5. |
| Jobson . . . | The Devil to Pay . . . | D. L. | 1796, May 21. |
| Job Thornberry . . . | John Bull . . . | D. L. | 1803, Aug. 26. |
| Joe . . . | The Fortune-teller . . . | D. L. | 1808, Sep. 29. |
| John Dory . . . | Wild Oats . . . | D. L. | 1814, Jan. 31. |
| Jonas . . . | Island of St. Marguerite . . | D. L. | 1789, Nov. 18. |
| Jonas . . . | Knave or not . . . | D. L. | 1798, Jan. 25. |
| Juan . . . | Doctor and Apothecary . . | D. L. | 1788, Oct. 25. |
| Juba . . . | Cato . . . | D. L. | 1784, April 28. |
| King Arthur . . . | Tom Thumb. | | |
| La Fourbe . . . | Try again . . . | H. | 1790, June 26. |
| La Gloire . . . | Surrender of Calais . . . | H. | 1791, July 30. |
| La uncot . . . | Merchant of Venice . . . | D. L. | 1793, March 5. |
| Lawrence . . . | Strangers at Home . . . | D. L. | 1785, Dec. 8. |
| Lazarillo . . . | Spanish Barber . . . | H. | 1792, June 22. |
| Lenitive . . . | The Prize . . . | D. L. | 1793, March 11. |
| Leonard . . . | A Word for Nature . . . | D. L. | 1798, Dec. 5. |
| Leontine . . . | Good-natured Man . . . | H. | 1783, Aug. 20. |
| Leopold . . . | Siege of Belgrade . . . | D. L. | 1791, Jan. 1. |
| Lingo . . . | Cymon . . . | D. L. | 1791, Dec. 31. |
| Lissardo . . . | The Agreeable Surprise . . | H. | 1792, July 9. |
| Litigamus . . . | The Wonder . . . | D. L. | 1789, Jan. 1. |
| Little John . . . | Better late than never . . | D. L. | 1790, Nov. 17. |
| Lodowick . . . | Robin Hood . . . | D. L. | 1797, June 6. |
| Longbow . . . | Adelmorn . . . | D. L. | 1801, May 4. |
| Lord Henry . . . | Egyptian Festival . . . | D. L. | 1800, March 11. |
| Lord Melville . . . | Personation . . . | D. L. | 1805, April 23. |
| Lord Newberry . . . | New Peerage . . . | D. L. | 1787, Nov. 10. |
| Lopez . . . | Separate Maintenance. | | |
| Lopez . . . | The False Friend . . . | D. L. | 1789, Oct. 24. |
| Lothario . . . | The Fair Penitent . . . | Birmingham. | 1779, |
| Lovel . . . | High Life Below Stairs . . | D. L. | 1783, Sep. 20. |
| Lovewell . . . | Clandestine Marriage . . | D. L. | 1784, Aug. 19. |
| Lucio . . . | Measure for Measure . . | D. L. | 1785, Oct. 22. |
| Macduff . . . | Macbeth . . . | Birmingham. | 1779. |
| Malvolio . . . | Twelfth Night . . . | D. L. | 1797, May 17. |
| Marcoff . . . | Hero of the North . . . | D. L. | 1803, Feb. 19. |
| Marplot . . . | The Busy Body . . . | D. L. | 1802, Dec. 8. |
| Martin . . . | Will and no Will . . . | D. L. | 1799, April 24. |
| Martin . . . | Feudal Times . . . | D. L. | 1799, Jan. 19. |
| Marquis . . . | Widow's Vow . . . | H. | 1786, June 20. |

| <i>Character.</i> | <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Martius . . . | Triumph of Honour . . . | Haymarket. | 1783, Aug. 13. |
| Master . . . | The Toy-Shop . . . | D. L. | 1790, May 7. |
| Matt Moneo . . . | Turk and no Turk . . . | H. | 1785, July 9. |
| Melange . . . | A Day in London . . . | D. L. | 1807, April 9. |
| Melville . . . | Vimonda . . . | H. | 1787, Sep. 5. |
| Mercutio . . . | Romeo and Juliet . . . | H. | 1796, Sep. 7. |
| Michael . . . | The Adopted Child . . . | D. L. | 1795, May 1. |
| Miss Leah . . . | Jewish Courtship . . . | D. L. | 1787, April 23. |
| Mother Cole . . . | The Minor . . . | D. L. | 1792, March 29. |
| Motley . . . | The Castle Spectre . . . | H. | 1797, Dec. 14. |
| Mrs. Slammekin . . . | Beggar's Opera . . . | H. | 1791, Aug. 19. |
| Muskato . . . | The Pannel . . . | D. L. | 1788, Nov. 28. |
| Nicholas Saperigo . . . | Don Pedro . . . | H. | 1796, July 23. |
| Nicholas . . . | The Midnight Hour . . . | D. L. | 1803, May 9. |
| Nimble . . . | Crotchet Lodge . . . | D. L. | 1813, Dec. 13. |
| Noodle . . . | Tom Thumb . . . | | |
| Norval . . . | Douglas . . . | Glasgow. | 1803. |
| Ollapod . . . | The Poor Gentleman . . . | D. L. | 1809, May 15. |
| Orlando . . . | As you Like it . . . | Birmingham. | 1779. |
| Oroonoko . . . | Oroonoko . . . | D. L. | 1781, May 17. |
| Owen . . . | The Enchanted Wood . . . | H. | 1792, July 25. |
| Parolles . . . | All's Well that ends Well . . . | H. | 1785, July 26. |
| Paul . . . | The Fool . . . | D. L. | 1785, April 15. |
| Paul Warmans . . . | Baroness of Bruchsal . . . | H. | 1786, July 23. |
| Peeping Tom . . . | Peeping Tom . . . | H. | 1792, Aug. 22. |
| Pegasus Punccheon . . . | Gay Deceivers . . . | H. | 1804, Aug. 22. |
| Pendragon . . . | Which is the Man? . . . | D. L. | 1808, May 12. |
| Peregrine Bramble . . . | Adventurers . . . | D. L. | 1790, March 18. |
| Perez (Copper Captain) . . . | Rule a Wife and have a Wife . . . | D. L. | 1799, May 14. |
| Petruchio . . . | Katherine and Petruchio . . . | D. L. | 1799, May 3. |
| Philotas . . . | The Grecian Daughter . . . | | |
| Phrenzy . . . | The Welsh Heiress . . . | D. L. | 1795, April 17. |
| Pietro . . . | Urania . . . | D. L. | 1802, Jan. 22. |
| Pistol . . . | Merry Wives of Windsor . . . | D. L. | 1802, Oct. 26. |
| Plume . . . | The Recruiting Officer . . . | D. L. | 1791, April 27. |
| Plodden . . . | She's Eloped . . . | D. L. | 1798, May 19. |
| Poet . . . | The Author . . . | H. | 1781, June 1. |
| Posthumus . . . | Cymbeline . . . | H. | 1782, Aug. 9. |
| Prater . . . | First Faults . . . | D. L. | 1799, May 3. |
| Prattle . . . | The Deuce is in Him . . . | D. L. | 1797, May 1. |
| Prince of Wales . . . | Henry IV. (Part I.) . . . | H. | 1779, April 24. |
| Prompter . . . | Prelude to the Beggar's Opera . . . | H. | 1781, Aug. 8. |
| Quintessence (Doctor) . . . | Dissipation . . . | D. L. | 1781, March 9. |
| Racket . . . | The Soldier's Return . . . | D. L. | 1805, April 23. |
| Ramble . . . | Foul Deeds will rise . . . | H. | 1804, July 18. |
| Randall . . . | Fatal Curiosity . . . | H. | 1782, June 29. |
| Raymond . . . | Countess of Salisbury . . . | H. | 1780, Aug. 11. |
| Razor . . . | Upholsterer . . . | | |
| Richard . . . | Richard the Third . . . | H. | 1791, Aug. 24. |
| Rigdum Funnidos . . . | Chrononhotonthologos . . . | | |
| Robert . . . | The Curfew . . . | D. L. | 1807, Feb. 19. |
| Robin . . . | No Song, No Supper . . . | D. L. | 1790, April 14. |
| Rocket . . . | Soldier's Return . . . | D. L. | 1805, April 23. |
| Roger . . . | The Ghost . . . | D. L. | 1793, Jan. 25. |
| Rolando . . . | The Honey Moon . . . | D. L. | 1805, Jan. 31. |

| <i>Character.</i> | <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Romeo . . . | The Jubilee . . . | Drury Lane. | 1785, Nov. 18. |
| Sadi . . . | Mountaineers . . . | H. | 1793, Aug. 3. |
| Sailor . . . | The Shipwreck. | | |
| Sam Squib . . . | Past Ten o'clock . . . | D. L. | 1815, March 11. |
| Sancho . . . | Lovers' Quarrels . . . | D. L. | 1801, May 11. |
| Scapin . . . | The Cheats of Scapin . . . | D. L. | 1793, Jan. 4. |
| Scrub . . . | The Beau's Stratagem . . . | D. L. | 1789, Jan. 7. |
| Scout . . . | The Village Lawyer . . . | H. | 1787, Aug. 28. |
| Sebastian . . . | Twelfth Night . . . | D. L. | 1782, Sep. 21. |
| Serjeant Circuit . . . | Lesson for Lawyers . . . | D. L. | 1789, May 9. |
| Serjeant Gloss . . . | Westminster Hall in an Uproar . . . | H. | 1785, Aug. 16. |
| Shacabac . . . | Blue Beard . . . | D. L. | 1798, Jan. 23. |
| Sheva . . . | The Jew . . . | D. L. | 1794, May 8. |
| Shift . . . | The Minor . . . | H. | 1786, July 25. |
| Shylock . . . | Merchant of Venice . . . | H. | 1795, Aug. 3. |
| Sidney . . . | False Delicacy . . . | D. L. | 1782, Oct. 14. |
| Simon . . . | Seeing is Believing . . . | D. L. | 1783, Aug. 22. |
| Simon Pure . . . | Bold Stroke for a Wife . . . | Birmingham. | 1779. |
| Singles (Three) . . . | Three and the Deuce . . . | H. | 1795, Sep. 2. |
| Sir Anthony Absolute . . . | Rivals . . . | D. L. | 1790, April 14. |
| Sir Anthony Branville . . . | Discovery . . . | D. L. | 1806, April 21. |
| Sir Bashful Constant . . . | Way to keep Him . . . | D. L. | 1802, May 10. |
| Sir David Dunder . . . | Ways and Means . . . | H. | 1788, May 10. |
| Sir Fretful Plagiary . . . | The Critic . . . | D. L. | 1796, April 13. |
| Sir Harry Beagle . . . | Jealous Wife . . . | D. L. | 1802, Oct. 21. |
| Sir Harry Groveley . . . | Maid of the Oaks . . . | H. | 1782, Aug. 15. |
| Sir John Brute . . . | Way to keep Him . . . | H. | 1796, Aug. 8. |
| Sir John Classick . . . | Married Man . . . | H. | 1789, July 15. |
| Sir John Restless . . . | All in the Wrong . . . | D. L. | 1803, April 2. |
| Sir Robert Bramble . . . | The Poor Gentleman . . . | H. | 1804, July 14. |
| Sir Toby Twaddle . . . | The Family Party . . . | H. | 1789, July 11. |
| Skirmish . . . | The Deserter . . . | D. L. | 1787, Dec. 17. |
| Smart . . . | Wilmore Castle . . . | D. L. | 1800, Oct. 21. |
| Smirk . . . | The Minor . . . | H. | 1786, July 25. |
| Somerville . . . | The Fatal Interview . . . | D. L. | 1782, Nov. 16. |
| Somno . . . | The Sleep-walker . . . | | |
| Sparkish . . . | The Country Girl . . . | H. | 1791, Aug. 2. |
| Spatterdash . . . | The Young Quaker . . . | H. | 1783, July 26. |
| Speed . . . | Two Gentlemen of Verona . . . | D. L. | 1790, Jan. 13. |
| Sponge . . . | Cheap Living . . . | D. L. | 1797, Oct. 21. |
| Sprightly . . . | Adventures of a Night . . . | D. L. | 1783, March 28. |
| Squire . . . | Piety in Pattens . . . | H. | 1810, July 23. |
| Squire Abel . . . | Last of the Family . . . | D. L. | 1797, May 8. |
| Squire Groom . . . | Love à la Mode . . . | D. L. | 1794, May 23. |
| Steady . . . | Variety . . . | D. L. | 1782, Feb. 25. |
| Stephano . . . | The Tempest . . . | D. L. | 1797, Feb. 22. |
| Steward . . . | Deaf and Dumb . . . | D. L. | |
| Storm . . . | Ella Rosenberg . . . | D. L. | 1813, May 10. |
| Sylvester Daggerwood . . . | Sylvester Daggerwood . . . | H. | 1795, June 9. |
| Sylvester Daggerwood . . . | Daggerwoods at Dunstable . . . | D. L. | 1798, June 5. |
| Tancred . . . | Tancred and Sigsmunda . . . | H. | 1784, July 12. |
| Tandem . . . | The Marriage Promise . . . | D. L. | 1803, April 16. |
| Tattle . . . | Love for Love . . . | D. L. | 1787, Nov. 14. |
| Ten-per-cent . . . | Hearts of Oak . . . | D. L. | 1803, Nov. 10. |
| Theodore . . . | Count of Narbonne . . . | D. L. | 1787, March 8. |
| Tim Tartlet . . . | The First Floor . . . | D. L. | 1787, Jan. 13. |
| Tipple . . . | The Flitch of Bacon . . . | D. L. | 1791, Dec. 7. |
| Tobine . . . | The Suicide . . . | H. | 1790, June 19. |

| <i>Character.</i> | <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Toby . . . | Devil in the Wine Cellar . . . | Haymarket. | 1786, July 25. |
| Tom . . . | Conscious Lovers . . . | D. L. | 1796, Dec. 20. |
| Tom Sturdy . . . | The Veteran Tar . . . | D. L. | 1801, Jan. 29. |
| Tom Surfeit . . . | False Alarms . . . | D. L. | 1807, Jan. 12. |
| Tony Lumpkin . . . | She Stoops to Conquer . . . | D. L. | 1790, May 26. |
| Touchstone . . . | As you Like it . . . | D. L. | 1789, Feb. 20. |
| Tradewell . . . | The City Madam . . . | D. L. | 1783, April 29. |
| Transit . . . | Hear both Sides . . . | D. L. | 1802, Dec. 29. |
| Trappanti . . . | She would, and she would not . . . | D. L. | 1789, April 30. |
| Trawl . . . | Broken Gold . . . | D. L. | 1806, Feb. 8. |
| Tressel . . . | Richard the Third . . . | H. | |
| Trim . . . | The Smugglers . . . | D. L. | 1796, April 13. |
| Trim . . . | The Funeral . . . | D. L. | 1799, April 17. |
| Trinculo . . . | Tempest . . . | | |
| Tristram Fickle . . . | The Weathercock . . . | D. L. | 1805, Nov. 18. |
| Trudge . . . | Inkle and Yarico . . . | D. L. | 1789, May 28. |
| Twins . . . | The Twins . . . | D. L. | 1799, April 8. |
| Twist . . . | Love in the East . . . | D. L. | 1788, Feb. 25. |
| Vapid . . . | Dramatist . . . | | |
| Vapour . . . | My Grandmother . . . | H. | 1793, Dec. 16. |
| Vizard . . . | Trick upon Trick . . . | D. L. | 1789, Dec. 22. |
| Voltore . . . | The Fox . . . | H. | 1783, Sep. 12. |
| Waiter . . . | The Candidate . . . | H. | 1782, Aug. 5. |
| Walter . . . | Children in the Wood . . . | H. | 1793, Oct. 1. |
| Walmsley . . . | Hannah Hewitt . . . | D. L. | 1798, May 7. |
| Wattle . . . | The Basket-maker . . . | H. | 1790, Sep. 4. |
| Watty Cockney . . . | The Romp . . . | D. L. | 1799, April 22. |
| Wellbred . . . | Every Man in his Humour . . . | D. L. | 1785, Dec. 30. |
| Whiskerandos . . . | The Critic . . . | | 1779, Oct. 29. |
| Wilding . . . | The Gamesters . . . | D. L. | 1806, April 28. |
| Wilford . . . | The Iron Chest . . . | D. L. | 1796, March 12. |
| Will Steady . . . | The Purse . . . | H. | 1794, Feb. 8. |
| Witwood . . . | The Way of the World . . . | D. L. | 1800, Nov. 22. |
| Worthiman . . . | Lovers' Resolutions . . . | D. L. | 1802, March 2. |
| Young Fashion . . . | Trip to Scarborough . . . | D. L. | 1787, Dec. 28. |
| Young Philpot . . . | The Citizen . . . | H. | 1790, June 17. |
| Young Pranks . . . | The London Hermit . . . | H. | 1793, June 29. |
| Young Rapid . . . | Cure for the Heart-ache . . . | | |
| Young Sadboy . . . | The Quaker . . . | H. | 1795, Aug. 21. |
| Young Wilding . . . | The Liar . . . | D. L. | 1800, Dec. 4. |
| Zack Fungus . . . | The Commissary . . . | H. | 1793, June 25. |
| Zaphna . . . | Mahomet . . . | D. L. | 1778, Nov. 11. |
| Zarno . . . | Zorinski . . . | H. | 1795, June 20. |

Character in

| <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
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| The Absent Apothecary - - | Drury Lane. | 1813, Feb. 10. |
| Alive and Meiry - - - | D. L. | 1796, May 17. |
| Anna - - - - | D. L. | 1793, Feb. 25. |
| The Apparition - - - | H. | 1794, Sep. 3. |
| The Carnival - - - - | D. L. | 1781, Dec. 13. |
| The Charity Boy - - - | D. L. | 1796, Nov. 5. |
| Election of a Manager - - | H. | 1784, June 2. |
| Embarkation - - - - | D. L. | 1799, Oct. 3. |
| False Delicacy. Farce by Cobb. Farce by Thos. Moore. Farce by Boaden. Farce by S. Kemble (probably The Northern Inn). Farce by Mrs. Inchbald. Farce, with music by Cobb. Fast Asleep - - - - | D. L. | 1797, Nov. 28. |
| Fortune's Wheel - - - | D. L. | 1793, May 7. |
| Force of Ridicule - - - | D. L. | 1796, Dec. 6. |
| Friend in Need - - - | D. L. | 1797, Feb. 11. |
| Godolphin - - - - | D. L. | 1813, Oct. 6. |
| Honey Moon - - - - | D. L. | 1797, Jan. 7. |
| The Hovel - - - - | D. L. | 1797, May 23. |
| The Hue and Cry - - - | D. L. | 1791, May 11. |
| Hyde Park - - - - | D. L. | 1813, June 17. |
| Invisible Mistress - - - | D. L. | 1788, April 21. |
| Jack of Newberry - - - | D. L. | 1795, May 6. |
| Mahmoud - - - - | D. L. | 1796, April 30. |
| Mariners - - - - | D. L. | 1793, May 10. |
| Married Man - - - - | | |
| Nobody - - - - | D. L. | 1794, Nov. 29. |
| Opposition - - - - | H. | 1790, Aug. 6. |
| Osmin and Daraxa - - - | D. L. | 1793, March 7. |
| The Outlaws - - - - | D. L. | 1798, Oct. 18. |
| The Pavilion - - - - | D. L. | 1799, Nov. 16. |
| Play by Mr. Hull. Projects, a Farce by Kemble - | D. L. | 1786, Jan. 18. |
| Quacks - - - - | D. L. | 1784, April 17. |

| <i>Play.</i> | <i>Theatre.</i> | <i>Date.</i> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| School of Eloquence - - - | Haymarket. | 1780, April 4. |
| Sharp set - - - | D. L. | 1809, May 15. |
| Shepherdess of Cheapside - - | D. L. | 1796, Feb. 20. |
| The Swindlers - - - | D. L. | 1792, April 12. |
| Taste and Feeling - - - | H. | 1790, Aug. 13. |
| Temper - - - | D. L. | 1809, May 1. |
| 'Tis an ill Wind, &c. - - - | D. L. | 1788, April 14. |
| Transformation (nine characters) | D. L. | 1787, April 25. |
| Travelling Author - - - | | |
| The Village Coquette - - | D. L. | 1792, April 16. |
| Who pays the Reckoning? - - | H. | 1795, July 16. |
| Wives in Plenty - - - | H. | 1793, Nov. 23. |

ERRATA.

VOL. I.

- Page 27, line 11 from the bottom, dele *of* before "some."
— 79, line 7 from the bottom, for *Carbaccio* read "Corbacciò."
— 110, line 4 from the top, insert *a* before "manager."
— 113, line 11 from the bottom, for *Hoy-mow* read "Hay-mow."
— 114, line 5 from the bottom, for *Commissioners* read "Connoisseurs."
— 299, line 8 from the bottom, for *ce* read "*cette*."

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- Page 49, line 7 from the bottom, for *Adelmon* read "Adelmorn."
— 113, line 2 from the bottom, for *innocences* read "innocence."
— 195*, line 7, for *acts* read "arts."
— 259, line 16, for *Booth* read "Boott" twice.
— 294, line 2 and throughout the page, for *Eieke* read "Eicke."
— 319, line 7 from the bottom, for *quotation* read "quatrain."

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